

# **CONCEPT OF ISLAM**

**By**

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## PREFACE

Most of those who teach Islam in American universities are non-Muslims who studied this religion with orientalists and who have hardly any access to the original sources of Islam: the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah. The result, unfortunately, is disfigured courses dictated by unintentional ignorance of facts or intentional distortions initiated by prejudiced, unfair writers. The lamentable state of affairs was my reason for publishing this concise presentation of the Islamic faith.

The contents of this book are a resume of a series of lectures delivered at Southwest Missouri State University during the 1980-81 academic year to undergraduates taking a preliminary course in Islam. The book is meant to give a comprehensive idea about Islam as Muslims understand it. I purposefully abstained from referring to and refuting the many false allegations and mistakes mentioned in most of the orientalists' books studied by American students. An objective survey of Islam as a monotheistic faith and a system of life would help the student undertake a comparative study and find the facts for himself.

It is hoped that this book with its basic elementary studies would help contribute to the most desired and badly needed mutual understanding among monotheists, as without it no love and no peace among the different believers can be realized. Our era is overflowed with "secular" and "natural" doctrines that ignore religion, if not ridicule it, leaving the individual void of spiritual fulfillment and moral values. The result is the tragic collapse of our family institution, social solidarity and individual integrity. We need religion to guide us back to what is peaceful, beautiful and loveable.

Mahmoud Abu-Saud



## INTRODUCING ISLAM

### I. EXPLORATION OF THE QUESTION: IS ISLAM A RELIGION?

A consideration of whether any movement, philosophy, ideology, or way of life is a religion must begin with an understanding of what is meant by "religion" as used in a particular context.

#### A. SOME DEFINITIONS

Many definitions give emphasis to the metaphysical or psychological connotations of the term "religion". For example, the *Encyclopedia Americana*, (1969 edition) credits philosophers as defining religion to be "a superstitious structure of incoherent metaphysical notions," and sociologists as identifying it as "the collective expression of human values." Psychologists, according to the *Americana*, term religion "the mythical complex surrounding a projected super ego," while Karl Marx condemns it as "the opiate of the people." All these definitions underscore the abstract aspect of religion, implying the separation between that which is sacred (abstract or spiritual) and that which is secular (temporal or practical). Even the German philosopher Hegel, who believed that "God is the beginning of all things and the end of all things,"<sup>1</sup> thought of religion as a domain of feelings and concepts independent from the secular life in which humans interact in their societies. Hegel says:

"We know that in religion we withdraw ourselves from what is temporal and that religion is for our consciousness that region in which all enigmas of the world are solved, all the contradictions of deeper-

<sup>1</sup>G. W. F. Hegel, *On Art, Religion & Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 129.

reaching thought have their meaning unveiled, and where the voice of heart's pain is silenced—the region of eternal truth, or eternal rest, or eternal peace."<sup>2</sup>

The idea of religion as a withdrawal from temporal life is unacceptable to the Muslim. The liberal contemporary philosopher Erich Fromm, on the other hand, used the term religion in what he calls a "broad sense" and qualified it as follows:

"Social character must fulfill any human being's inherent religious needs. To clarify, "religion" as I use it here does not refer to a system that has necessarily to do with a concept of god or with idols or even a system perceived as religious, but to any group-shared system of thought and action that offers the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. Indeed, in this broad sense of the word, no culture in the past or present, and it seems no culture in the future, can be considered as not having religion."<sup>3</sup>

What Fromm conceived to be a "broad sense" use of the term is much too restricted and metaphysical to include Islam as a religion. Any definition which states or implies a separation of man's spiritual nature from his physical nature is unacceptable to the Muslim.

#### B. DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAM AS A RELIGION

The *Americana* cites "certain forms of human activity and belief which are commonly recognized as religious: worship, separation of the sacred from the profane, belief in the soul, belief in God or gods, acceptance of the supernatural revelation and a quest for salvation."

<sup>2</sup>Hegel, p. 128

<sup>3</sup>Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be* (New York, Harper & Row, 1976), p. 125.

Islam, the Muslim's religion, accepts certain of these abstract concepts that are common to the definition of all religions. Islam includes worship, belief in the soul, belief in God and in revelation, and in a quest for salvation. The Muslim would accept the Hegelian idea quoted above that religion is a solace of the heart's pains and that it provides eternal truth and rest, and Fromm's idea that religion is a motivating power that creates the impulses which contribute to "the energy necessary to move men and women to accomplish drastic social change...."<sup>4</sup> But Islam is as much a practical as an abstract philosophy (religion). The Muslim's religion addresses itself directly to man's needs, whether the need is thought to be material (therefore secular) or emotional (therefore spiritual). Islam does not recognize any demarcation between the temporal or secular and the religious or spiritual. Islam sees man as an integral entity composed of the inseparable and indistinguishable combination of soul and mass. Any attempt to live a life in which one of these elements is divorced from the other is bound to fail.

#### 1. Rational law of existence

Islam views man as both a physical and a spiritual being. Therefore, every activity in which a person engages has both physical and spiritual significance. Likewise, every emotion and individual experience is given both physical and spiritual expression. For example, when man feels pain, his endocrine glands secrete adrenalin; when he feels joy, his muscles respond to produce a smile or a tear. Love and hate, courage and cowardice, altruism and egoism, these and all values are given some sort of physical expression. Man is soul and body; lacking either element, a person ceases to be human. The doctrine or ideology of Islam is expressed in an applied philosophy which explains not only the relationship of humans to their Creator but also the rights and obligations of persons to others in human society. In the Islamic doctrine,

<sup>4</sup>Fromm, p. 128.



"worship" is not a mere ritual of submission or quest for salvation, but it is principally the practice of dealing with others in justice and sincerity for the purpose of fulfilling man's mission in this world. Islam sees man as having been created to follow the eternal laws of existence for the purpose of improving himself in an effort to keep in touch with his Creator. Keeping in touch with God brings upon an individual eternal peace and happiness.

Muslims are not allowed to force their beliefs upon others,<sup>5</sup> nor has Islam ever used supernatural signs or miracles to prove its authenticity. The only miracle in Islam is its Holy Book, the *Qur'an*,<sup>6</sup> which contains the words of Allah (God) as revealed to his Prophet Muhammad.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the most striking characteristic of Islam is its simple logistics. Despite the obvious fact that man cannot completely understand what lies beyond his sensual faculties, Islam emphasizes the importance of logical conviction in acquiring a solid belief. The basic philosophical criterion of Islam is *oneness*, the *oneness* of the Creator (in a strict monotheistic sense) and the unity of all creatures, including mankind. Because no being can exist by itself, it must relate to other beings. This inherent relationship among created entities constitutes what we shall refer to in this study as the "law of existence." (It is this law which is used as a punishment against transgressors who break it, as they have to fear the consequences of their infraction.) To believe in Islam one not only has to accept the laws but must be convinced of their correctness and absolutism. Such acceptance is a cognitive, not a psychological, process.

A religion that requires people to reflect on the phenomena of nature, about the correlation between events and their causation, and to seek out the constant relationships among variables is a religion built on rationalism rather than on a "superstitious structure of incoherent metaphysical notions." Nor could it be considered a "mythical complex" or a "collective expression of human values." (See page iii) Such a

religion is not superstitious nor purely metaphysical because it exhorts humans to ponder facts before it asks them to *believe* in the metaphysical. It cannot be considered *mythical*, because it deals with materials and behavioral issues that confront people daily. The most pious, the most worthy, the staunchest believer is not, in the Muslim's view, an ascetic hermit who secludes himself in a monastery. On the contrary, God requires that Muslims live a normal life in their society and "...enjoin what is just and to forbid what is evil."<sup>8</sup> In the *Qur'an*, God warns people about the dangers of social indifference. Every member of a society must promote unity and obstruct evil in that society. God says, "...And fear tumult or oppression which affects not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong."<sup>9</sup> Anyone who tolerates or accepts wrongdoing is violating the basic laws of existence and must necessarily suffer the consequences of that wrong in his society. Muslims embrace a basic philosophy or ideology called *Shir'a*. *Shir'a* is unique as it blends theory with practice, the spiritual with the secular, and as it takes into account the fallibility of man with all his shortcomings and weaknesses. *Shir'a* is not a utopian philosophy, a dream of the perfect human in the perfect society where there is no wrong, no hunger, no sin, no hate or jealousy, no war or belligerence. It is a realistic concept that expects persons to err and to pay for their errors. It gives individuals some basic laws of existence which can be considered more axiomatic than pragmatic. On such laws, Islam builds its *systems*, organizing human society into social, political, economic, and aesthetic aspects. These laws are permanent, but models change according to circumstances in time. Early Islamic history provides excellent evidence of how the basic laws were strictly observed in the very primitive society during the days of Muhammad (Peace be upon him<sup>10</sup>) and how they constituted the core of the respondent Islamic civilization during the ten centuries that followed.

<sup>5</sup>*Qur'an*, 9: 71.

<sup>6</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 25.

<sup>10</sup>This is a tribute which Muslims pay in respect to their Prophet whenever his name is mentioned. However we shall consider the tribute as tacit in this textbook.

<sup>5</sup>*Qur'an*, 10: 99.

<sup>6</sup>The *Qur'an* is commonly spelled in English *Koran*.

<sup>7</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 88.

## 2. *Metaphysical concepts*

The rationalism just described does not mean that Islam has no eschatological and metaphysical concepts built into it. We shall see that heeding God is a basic teaching in Islam. Muslims believe in man's destiny, in the existence and function of angels, and in revelation. Such beliefs are derived from their "rational" belief in God Who informed them about such concepts and Who required them to believe. In all cases, transcendental beliefs support the laws of existence, but never contradict them. For example, in Islam, belief in life after death is a logical analogy to belief in life before death. The Muslim sees life as an absolute energy that has no beginning and no end. Likewise, to believe that men will be judged by God is a logical application of the axiomatic law of action and reaction. Destiny is nothing more than the pre-knowledge of the Creator of what is going to happen to His creatures. It does not affect a person's will to decide or his choice to think or act, because, though known to God, his destiny is unknown to him. Islam exhorts people to seek the laws and to comply with them. However, if a person fails to find the law or to apply it properly, he should not lose hope or courage, but should accept the inevitable consequences of failure and continue in his search by trial and error.

Finally, then, to answer the question raised at the outset of this introduction, it can be said that Islam is certainly a religion, but it is also much more. Islam is a socio-political and economic system functioning in accordance with spiritual values.

## CHAPTER ONE PRE-ISLAM

### I. *PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA*

#### A. *THE LAND*

Arabia is the largest peninsula in the world, surrounded by the Persian Gulf in the east, the Arabian Sea in the south and the Red Sea in the west. These boundaries, added to its geological formation, have always played a conspicuous role in the formation of the character of its populations and their history.

Most of the peninsula is a blazing hot desert. The southwest is the only area that receives enough rain to make it an exception. However, the peninsula is not a flat stretch of sand in its entirety. The Hejaz mountains run from 'Aqaba in the north to the southern-most point of Yemen. Yemen itself is a mountainous plateau with elevations that exceed 10,000 feet. The central part of the country, Najd, which extends from latitude 25 to the northern Palestinian desert, is another plateau about 3,000 feet high. Another mountainous area borders the Gulf of Oman in the far southeast. The desert low land is in the eastern region, starting from the southern coast of the Arabian Sea, running into the vast al-Rub' al-Khali to the north, bordering the Persian Gulf, and finally joining the western Iraqi Sahara in the far north.

The lack of rain is responsible for the harshness of life. There are few areas where some springs flow or where deep wells provide enough water for some plants to grow. Where water exists, life commensurately exists. Al-Ta'if, south of Mecca, is a city where there is an abundance of springs and consequently it is rich in flora of all kinds. Mecca, however, has a limited number of wells and could not have developed as it did had water not been brought in from adjacent areas.



Yemen is exposed to the monsoons and consequently is rich in vegetation. In the past, it was known all over the world for its myrrh and frankincense. Even today, Yemen grows the best quality of coffee.

## B. THE INHABITANTS

One can hardly find any bond that united the Arabs before the advent of Islam. Though many historians call the Arabs "Semites," it is questionable whether the Semites have a distinct racial identity. As Shem was the brother of Ham, it seems unrealistic to consider the descendants of the two brothers as having different ethnic origins. John Christopher expresses the difficulty in finding a common denominator for the Arabs:

"The term (Arabs) does not refer to a specific religious group, for there are non-Muslim minorities in the Arab world, nor does it refer to a specific race, for Arabia and the Fertile Crescent have been human melting pots since the dawn of history. Nor is there any necessary racial connotation in the more inclusive term, *Semitic*, which has no real scientific basis and was invented in the modern West to describe the descendants of Shem, the eldest son of Noah in the modern Book of Genesis. The bonds that tie Arabs together and link them to other Semitic peoples are more linguistic than racial."<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that language did play an important part in the history of Arabia, as Christopher suggests, especially from the second century onward. However, since the Arabs were not race-conscious, language itself was not a bond strong enough to bring them together as one nation having a political identity and an established government. So it was their tie to the land, the Arabian Peninsula, that Arabs had in common in the pre-Islamic era.

<sup>1</sup>John B. Christopher, *The Islamic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 7.

The shales of oil underneath the surface of the Arabian Peninsula are evidence that in the early ages of human history a rich fauna and flora must have occupied the peninsula. With these bounties, man usually exploits nature to his advantage and improves upon his material conditions, starting a sort of civilization. Even during the times of the Assyrians, the Arabs had some sort of civilization:

"The inscriptions of the latter (Assyrians) provide information on campaigns against the Arabs and their fortress Adamu (Daumat al-Jandal) and refer to a series of Arab queens, thus evidencing a matriarchal period in the history of the Arabs, which was to recur a thousand years later with the more celebrated queens, Zenobia and Mavia."<sup>2</sup>

It is not correct, therefore, to think of all the inhabitants of Arabia as crude, primitive Bedouins without culture or heritage. Nomads who could not find a spot of land where they could eke out a livelihood were obliged to move constantly, searching for pasture. Yet, whenever the Bedouin could get a chance to settle, he would quickly learn the rules of an organized society and excel in that society. One could see this happen in the second century A.C.E.<sup>3</sup> when the rule of Seleucids over Syria started to disintegrate. The Arabs quickly stepped in, and Syria was practically under their rule at the time the Romans annexed that country.

Another evidence of civilization is the Arab dynasties whose presence was much felt in the sixth century, and who settled on the borders of the two great powers of the time—the Sassanids (Persians) and the Byzantines. They fit into the civilization prevailing in the two empires, built their own cities, and established stable and organized political systems. The Lakhmids, who were the neighbors and allies of the

<sup>2</sup>Article by Irfan Shahid, "Pre-Islamic Arabia", in P.M. et. al. in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 1a (New York: Cambridge Press, 1978), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>A.C.E. stands for "after Christian era," as A.D. (Anno Domini—In The Year of Our Lord) is unacceptable to Muslims.



Persians, built al-Hira and established a kingdom which flourished during the days of al-Mundhir ibn al-Nu'man (503-554 A.C.E.) The Ghassanids, neighbors and vassals of the Romans, built Petra and Palmera, borrowing from Roman architecture and adding some fine art of their own. They established a solid principedom and were renowned for their military prowess. Their last king was al-Harith ibn Jabala (529-569 A.C.E.). A similar principedom was established on the boundaries of Himyar (Yemen) where the city of Kinda was built by the settlers and where their last king before the Islamic conquest, al-Harith ibn'Amr, ruled (528 A.C.E.).

The Arabs who lived in the peninsula in the sixth century (A.C.E.) are classified into three divisions: Yemenites (Himyarites), Bedouins (Nomads) and Sedentaries. Each classification had distinctive characteristics which resulted from its particular geographic and environmental circumstances.

#### 1. *Yemenites or Himyarites*

Yemen, once called Himyar, was the most prosperous part of the peninsula owing to its natural resources. Those who lived in this environment learned how to cultivate their land and developed a civilization equal to those established in Syria and Iraq. They developed a sophisticated system of irrigation and built the historic dam of Ma'rib, which made it possible to cultivate vast areas of land which was the major source of the country's wealth. They could navigate as far as India, and built their principal port Qana' on the coast of the Arabian Sea, bordering the south of the country. Southern Himyar, with its rich resources and ancient civilization, made good use of its wealth. The Himyarites established settlements around the oases lying along the commercial routes leading to the north. They introduced India and the Far East to the Romans and Persians, taking advantage of the Bedouins' eagerness to trade by selling them their products and imports. It was also common for them to hire the Bedouins who settled across their boundaries to fight their domestic and external wars. Himyarite ships carried spices,

perfumes and metallic manufactures from India, partly to be locally consumed and partly to be re-exported to the northern empires of the Romans and Persians. Arabs from Mecca and other parts used to come in caravans to Himyar during the winter to buy Indian and Yemenite merchandise before heading towards the north. Some of the goods were to be sold in Arabian commercial centers, such as Mecca and Medina, but the bulk would be transported during the summer to the two big empires. The *Qur'an* (106:2) refers to these business trips as the "journeys of winter and summer."

In ancient times, the Himyarites had worshipped the sun, the moon and a certain star called 'Athtar. But as the country was easily accessible to foreigners, adjacent religions and civilizations influenced the original beliefs and culture of its people. Thus, Arab paganism, Ethiopian Christianity, classical Judaism and Egyptian science and technology all had an effect on the Himyarites. The Arabs, attracted by the wealth of the country, infiltrated it and became involved in its trade and politics. The Byzantines, through their co-religious allies the Ethiopians, pressed for Christianization, while the Jews who came earlier in flight from the Romans' persecution wanted to proselytize as many Himyarites as they could in order to secure their advantageous position.

In the sixth century, the Monophysites<sup>4</sup> of Najran in Yemen were destroyed by the Jewish king of Yemen. Byzantium was angry at the event and persuaded Ethiopia to send a strong expedition to take vengeance. In 520 A.C.E. the Ethiopian army crossed the Red Sea at Bab al-Mandab strait, destroyed the king of Himyar and annexed the land to Ethiopia. Direct Ethiopian rule over Himyar lasted about fifty years, at the end of which time an Ethiopian soldier of fortune by the name of Abraha revolted and took power into his own hands. He effected positive reforms in contrast with his predecessors who had spread chaos and devastation in the country. Abraha turned his attention towards the Arabs who had settled on the boundaries of Himyar and subjected them to his

<sup>4</sup>Monophysites were a Christian sect which believed that Christ had a single divine nature.

rule. Later, he looked north and found Mecca gaining importance and building up materials and political power over the whole peninsula. A big army under his leadership marched up to Mecca with the intention of destroying the Ka'ba (later to become the holiest shrine in Islam), but he never entered it. Illness afflicted Abraha's soldiers, killing most of them and sending back the remainder without conquest. The expedition is referred to in the *Qur'an* (Ch. 105) and is mentioned by Muslim historians who named the year of the expedition (570 A.C.E.) the "Year of the Elephant." The Ethiopians were Monophysites and pro-Roman, if not vassals of Byzantium. Their rule over Himyar did not suit the Persians. Thus, immediately after the death of Abraha, the Sassanids responded to an invitation of some Himyarite nobles, and occupied the country for the next fifty years. Their rule was ended by the advent of Islam.

As one can see, Himyar was a haven for the many religions that were introduced into it by Monophysites, Jews, Zoroastrians and pagans. This diversified religious background prepared the Himyarites to embrace Islam without significant resistance. In fact, Muslim missionaries were welcomed by the majority of the population. The practice of freedom of speech and belief, the presence of the two major monotheist religions (Christianity and Judaism) and the accommodation of both Zoroastrianism and paganism made it easy for Muslims to seek converts without provoking resentment or violence. In fact, Himyar and its people played an active and constructive role in the history of Arabia, both because of its commercial activities which gave sustenance to the majority of sedentaries (non-nomads) who were mainly tradesmen and because of its religious tolerance.

All Arabs—other than Himyarites—were either nomads or sedentaries who lived differently, though they were ethnically the same. Settlement took place on the periphery of the civilized world within their reach, and in a lesser degree along the commercial routes crossing the vast deserts and arid areas, from south to north and from west to east. Wherever there was water, there were settlers.

## 2. Bedouins

Where there was insufficient water, there were nomadic tribes. The dire, stringent nature of the desert drove the Bedouins from their remote lands inside the vast Sahara towards adjacent countries which never made them welcome. The Bedouins lived a rugged, restless life, fighting among themselves as well as against aliens at the slightest and least significant provocation—an impulsive reaction to their harsh way of living. Theirs was subsistence living. Life was monotonous and fighting was the principal thrill for every individual in the tribe, male and female alike. They frequently fought against non-Arabs in the northwest and northeast, but they could never establish an organized political society except when they settled on a piece of land that provided sustenance on a permanent basis. It was not rare for them to attack the caravans carrying goods for merchants in the south or the north or for Arabian centers with large populations. Such raids were not motivated by mere villainy, hatred, or jealousy, nor accompanied by intentional blood shedding and violence. They were mostly the result of the Bedouins' need to survive. It is unfair to ascribe to the Bedouins the traits of piracy and plunder and to overlook their incentive and the noble side of their character. The Bedouin is a man who has great respect for honor. He is faithful to his tribe and to his friends, extremely hospitable to any guest that comes his way, and inherently faithful to Bedouin tradition. He is a member of a family which belongs to a clan which in turn belongs to a tribe. Though individualistic, a Bedouin is always proud of his kinsmen and his tribe and it is to them that he owes his first loyalty. The tribal system itself was a product of the geographical conditions which made the nomadic life necessary. Scarcity of the means of living created in the Bedouin an aggressive spirit and a sort of indifference to both life and death, while at the same time it developed in him a characteristic nobility and a sense of chivalry.

As a result of ignorance and backwardness, the pre-Islamic Arabs had some barbaric customs and traditions. For instance, drinking and gambling were accepted and common



practices. Females were treated like property, denied inheritance and were bartered. Some fathers buried their newly-born daughters because female babies brought poverty or shame. There were certain foods allowed to men but prohibited to women. Prostitution and fornication were popular and acceptable entertainment. Men were allowed to marry any number of women without limitation, while divorce was exclusively the man's right.

In short, the nature of the Arab, which made of him a proud, liberal man who considered himself equal to others and servant to none, and which conferred on him the commendable qualities of chivalry, hospitality and courage, was a very crude and primitive one. He was badly in need of a code of ethics to curb his instinctive vanities and to prompt him to make constructive contributions to society. He was a fanatical pagan, not because he really believed in the idols which he made by his own hands, but because he needed a god and his tradition gave him paganism.

Most pre-Islamic Bedouins were heathens despite efforts made by the numerous prophets who were sent to convert them. The most renowned of these prophets were Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ishmael (Isma'il) to whom all Arabs feel related. Muslims believe that it was Ibrahim who built in Mecca the first mosque (al-Ka'ba)<sup>5</sup> which, paradoxically enough, became the center of pre-Islamic paganism. Bedouins worshipped many idols; prominent among them were three daughters of god: al-Lat, al'Uzza and Manat. The first represented the sun, the second was the symbol of might, and the third was the goddess of fortune. Very few among the nomadic Bedouins embraced either Christianity or Judaism, and fewer still believed in Zoroastrianism. Such religions seemed to be more acceptable to the sedentaries than to the nomads.

### 3. *Sedentaries*

Socially, the sedentaries were quite different from the nomadic Arabs. As a result of their agglomerated society,

<sup>5</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 96.

they had to develop many codes and rules of social behavior and to form a sort of primitive political organization to keep peace among individuals and to defend the community against both internal disorder and external aggression. Settlements were composed of related clans and tribes. This explains why there are very few names of cities on any map of the pre-Islamic era. One could locate the areas where tribes such as Azd or Sulaym or Taym lived, but one could hardly count ten names of populated cities. In such tribal localities, pasture and commerce were the main economic activities of the people. Agriculture was very sparse and rather rudimentary except where there were ample supplies of water.

The local governing bodies of such tribal cities were composed of the distinguished heads of families. The heads would generally elect an elderly leader, a wise man (shaikh), who would simultaneously act as the supreme judge and the head of the tribe. The leader would generally consult with the heads of families before deciding upon important public issues. Consultation was an established tradition among the Arabs and was scrupulously observed. Another impressive tradition was their complete acceptance of verdicts issued by their judges. Leaders of tribes and heads of families were no exception; all individuals were really equal before the judge. They would consult with each other and accept the verdict of their judges. However, some strong figures occasionally decided for all the tribe and ruled as autocrats, though without pomp or material distinction.

Tribesmen had an extremely keen sense of equality, a reflection of the Arab's distinctive individualistic tendency. Men and women, even children, were self-conscious, proud and dignified, but always conscious of the dignity of others as well. One could hardly distinguish the head of the tribe from any of its members. All persons shared land and water resources available to them. Communal property was the rule despite their distinct individualism. Some of the settled tribes (such as al-Asha'ira) pooled their fortunes during wars, famines and hardships, and redistributed fortunes among themselves, to each according to his needs. This sense of equality was the result of the difficult geographical circumstances which all tribesmen endured. Living on the

rigorous desert obliged them to pool not only their possessions but also their abilities and efforts to defend themselves against starvation and external dangers. It was common for the Arabs to make alliances and sign treaties with adjacent tribes whereby a tribe would come to the rescue of another if either was ever attacked by a third party. They would also agree to certain judicial terms to be applied in case of conflict of interests or direct litigation. Without such alliances, the most virulent war of vengeance would continue for generations.

Christianity, Monophysitism, and to a lesser extent, Nestorianism (belief that Christ has two distinct natures, divine and human), and Judaism were well established in many localities populated by sedentaries. Quite a number of Jews and Christians, persecuted by the Byzantines, took refuge in these desert localities and converted many pagans to their religions.

It is obvious that Judaism existed in Arabia centuries before Christianity and hence could acquire a more advantageous position, both economically and politically. The fact that there was a large Jewish population in Medina (Yathrib)—the second most populous city during the sixth century—explains why they were able to convert a number of Arabs to Judaism and explains the power-politics roles Jews played during the early days of the first Islamic state. Jews prospered in Arabia, as they came from more civilized lands, knew more advanced methods of agriculture and had a more sophisticated knowledge of industries. They were, in addition, excellent merchants and money lenders.

Although there was no Jewish "state" in the sixth century, Judaism was conspicuous and Jews played a prominent role in the social life of all the communities in which they lived. Yet, Judaism as a religion underwent upheavals similar to those which afflicted both Christianity and Zoroastrianism. Many shades of idolatrous beliefs and practices infiltrated the original form of Jewish monotheistic religion as a result of the influence of both neighbors and conquerors:

"The Babylonian Gemara (popular during the sixth century and often even preferred to the Torah by

Orthodox Jewry) typically illustrates the crudeness of the sixth century Jew's intellectual and religious understanding by its jocular and imprudent remarks about God and many an absurd and outrageous belief and idea which lack not only sensibility but are also inconsistent with the Jewish faith in monotheism."<sup>6</sup>

### C. THE LANGUAGE

The language of all the inhabitants of Arabia has been Arabic since the beginning of recorded history. Arabic is the only language among the old Semite languages of the region that survived and is still a major language of the world today. In almost all the North African countries, and in the whole of the Arab Peninsula, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq, Arabic is spoken as the native language. Since the *Qur'an* was revealed in Arabic, all Muslims around the world consider it the language of Islam and know a minimum amount of Arabic—at least the words necessary to perform their rituals and prayers.

The Arabs, throughout their different stages of civilization, did not leave behind any artistic heritage other than literature. They mastered their language, enriched it with great elaboration, and considered eloquence a mark of excellence, deserving of respect. They utilized the language both as a means to depict the most subtle beauty of nature and the most intricate human feeling and as a weapon to fight their enemies and defend their friends. Poetry, in particular, was so treasured that a good poet in a tribe was considered a valuable asset and a source of political power.

It is not known for sure when the first script was invented, but scripts recorded on stones or plates of different material are very scanty indeed. The Arabic script was derived from the Nabatean (Aramaic) writing rather than from the old Sabian script, called Musnad. Nabatea was in the far north, to the east of Syria, and was inhabited by a Phoenician race.

<sup>6</sup>Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Muhammad Rasulallah* (Luknow, India: Academy of Islamic Research Publication, 1979), p. 14.



Sabae was the heart of Yemen and its people were Arabs. The fact that the Arabic script came from Aramaic rather than Musnad shows the far-reaching effects of Mediterranean civilization on the Arabs.

Few Arabs were literate. Literature was taught by the spoken word rather than by the written word. The Arabs had prodigious memories and could memorize unbelievable numbers of verses and epigrams. The spoken word was the medium of information, and a good poem would find its way to all tribes and tents within no time.

Such was the importance of the language to the Arabs that they kept improving their tongue and increasing their linguistic abilities and oratorial effectiveness. Originally, the language had a wide range of dialects spoken by widely scattered tribes; each tribe had its own. Nevertheless, there had always been a common standard of language accepted and comprehended by all. Before Islam, the Arabs annually convened a literary symposium where poets and eloquent speakers competed. The convention, which met in Mecca, was called *Souq 'Ukaz*, and the moderators were the leaders of the Quraysh tribe. The most distinguished poem would be written and hung on the walls of the Ka'ba as a token of honor. Such an annual meeting, together with increasing commercial activities and human intercourse, was a positive factor in unifying and purifying the language. When Islam was revealed early in the seventh century, linguistic eloquence was at its peak, and the Quraysh dialect was considered the purest of all Arabic dialects.

## II. PRE-ISLAMIC SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND RELIGION IN THE TWO GREAT EMPIRES

### A. THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The Byzantine Empire comprised Asia Minor, Palestine, Phoenicia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and most of North Africa. The area was rich in natural resources, but the lack of proper ideology (or the lack of genuine religion, using Fromm's term), left the people in poverty and depravity. The following passage gives a clear picture of the social conditions of that empire at that time:

"Byzantine social life was marked by tremendous contrasts. The religious attitude was deeply ingrained in popular minds. Asceticism and monasticism were widespread through the empire, and to an extraordinary degree, even the most commonplace individual seemed to take a vital interest in the deepest theological discussions, while all the people were much affected by a religious mysticism in their daily life. But, in contrast, the same people were exceptionally fond of all types of amusements. The great Hippodrome, seating 80,000 wide-eyed spectators, was the scene of hotly disputed chariot races which split the entire populace into rival factions of "Blue" and "Green." The Byzantine possessed both a love of beauty and a streak of cruelty and viciousness. Their sports were often bloody and sadistic, their tortures were horrible, and the life of their aristocracy was a mixture of luxury, intrigue and studied vice."<sup>7</sup>

This concise description of the Byzantine society reveals the perversion of all noble values, hence the degree of decadence of a great civilization. Religion, acumen, and zeal were directed to superficial dialectic discussions and futile controversies. Genuine Christian concern for mercy, love and forgiveness and the civilizing effects of beauty, mysticism, and asceticism were superseded by the Christian Byzantine's love of luxury, intrigue, and sadism. It is no surprise, then, that the Byzantine-Romans enslaved the Syrians and stripped the wealth of the Egyptians, and no wonder that bloody commotions and revolts protested the oppression of the rulers whose main objective was to collect more taxes in order to satiate their mundane vanities.

It is an irony that the empire built the most magnificent churches throughout the countries it occupied, that Christianity was the dominant religion, yet an overwhelming number of people lived in dire poverty while a limited number

<sup>7</sup>T. Waterbank and M. Tylor, *Civilizations, Past and Present* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman and Co., 1954), pp. 261-2.



of the so-called nobility wallowed in abundance and extravagant luxury. Religion, in such a setting, had no real or practical meaning. The oppressor and the oppressed, the killer and the killed, the robber and the robbed—all hailed their Christ and asked for his help. All were devout church followers and viewed themselves as good Christians. For that reason alone the Christian religion lost its real sense, because its effect upon the behavior of men was marginal.

Byzantium maintained its orthodox faith and, in the wake of its fanaticism, never tolerated any deviation from it. Both Monophysites and Nestorians were persecuted as heretics and were actually extradited. They emigrated, some to Persia, while others went to adjacent and far Arabian tribes where they won many converts. Their concept of Trinitarianism did not appeal to the primitive, simple mentality of the Bedouin. It did not seem reasonable to him to be denied his right to worship many gods and to be asked, in return, to worship a three-fold God. The intricate Christian concept of the Trinity obstructed the spread of Christianity in the peninsula, including Himyar which, as indicated earlier, was under the rule of Ethiopia for more than fifty years. Though the concept of Trinitarianism started to be hotly debated late in the fourth century, it became a dogma with Catholics and an essential part of Christian teachings and political loyalties.<sup>8</sup>

### B. THE SASSANID EMPIRE

The Sassanid Empire ruled all the lands between the Euphrates and the Indus together with Yemen, which was the most fertile and civilized part of the Arabian Peninsula. The Sassanids (Persians) had many features in common with the Byzantines: the love of extravagance and luxury among rulers, the great social gap between the nobility and their peoples, the ever-increasing taxes levied upon farmers and traders, and the indulgence in and craving for fun and festivity:

"In their bloody wars with the Byzantines, which seemed never ending and without any interest or profit to the common man, the Persian Kings had been plying their subjects as a cannon fodder."<sup>9</sup>

Even so, the Persians were less cruel and more tolerant in matters of belief than their rivals, the Byzantines.

The Persians believed in Zoroastrianism, a religion originally established by Zarathustra. Fire was the center of worship, while the main philosophy was the principle of cosmic dualism, in which the two duelling spirits of good (Ahuras) and evil (Daevas) alternate victory. This religion taught that man must do his utmost to have good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. In the third century, a religious reformer named Mani called for strict asceticism and celibacy, but was rebutted, though his school (Manichaeism) continued for centuries after him. In the fifth century, another religious reformer, by the name of Mazdac, in an effort to do away with evil and darkness,<sup>10</sup> preached community of women and goods in which all men could equally share. His followers acquired great influence due to the support of the Emperor Kavadh, and a quasi-anarchic communism prevailed for some time. Later on, another extreme dictatorial regime reigned over the empire, during which time emperors ruled with absolute despotism. By the sixth century, these emperors considered themselves "as the descendants of celestial gods."<sup>11</sup>

Instead of property being held in common, the entire wealth of the country belonged to the emperor, his family and his entourage, which alienated them completely from their people. Needless to say, under such conditions moral values degenerated and religion was reduced to empty rituals, or at most, to a refuge for the oppressed and impoverished people.

Such were the conditions and beliefs of the two great powers that ruled the civilized world at the advent of Islam. Their main characteristics can be compared to present Western materialism in which the main objective of men is material

<sup>8</sup>"The Holy Trinity," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967), Vol. 14, p. 295.

<sup>9</sup>Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Muhammad Rasulallah* (Lucknow, India: Islamic Research and Publications, 1979), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>Zoroastrians use "light" to express good and "dark" to express evil.

<sup>11</sup>*Muhammad Rasulallah*, p. 26.

enjoyment or what is commonly called "material welfare." This materialism, for the Byzantines and Sassanids, contributed to a devastating distortion of human values, a corruption of religion, and a complete denial of human rights. Freedom, justice and allegiance to God alone—the essence of all religions—became words stripped of their meanings and construed in terms of the generally accepted slogan: might is right. Material power replaced God for all practical purposes. Humans, whether slaves or free men, were not much better off than animals.

### III. SUMMARY

Conditions of the world in the sixth century, immediately before the advent of Islam, can be briefly described as follows:

1. As a result of the Byzantines' and the Sassanids' preoccupation with wars and personal enmities, their civilizations lacked the refinements that scientific enquiry, political philosophies, and humanitarian concerns bring to societies. H. G. Wells observes:

"Science and political philosophy seemed dead now in both these warring and decaying empires. The last philosophers of Athens, until their suppression, preserved the texts of the great literature of the past with an infinite reverence and want of understanding. But there remained no class of men in the world, no free gentlemen with bold and independent habits of thought to carry on the tradition of frank statement and enquiry embodied in these writings. The social and political chaos account largely for the disappearance of this class, but there was also another reason why the human intelligence was sterile and feverish during this age. Both empires were religious empires in a new way, in a way that greatly hampered the free activities of the human mind."<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note, as Wells suggests, that whenever religion hampers the free activities of mind, it becomes a factor of decadence and an element potentially destructive to human civilization.

2. Europe, India, and the Far East were disintegrated societies in a deplorable state of ignorance and decay. Europe drifted far from the Greek idea of liberty and the Roman idea of discipline, while India and the Far East were bound with the chains of their class-systems and religious traditions.

3. In the opinion of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi:

"The Arabs were raw, simple-minded and straight forward, possessing the will of iron. If they failed to entertain a belief, they had no hesitation in taking up the sword to fight against it, but if they were convinced of the truth of an idea, they stayed with it through fire and water, and were prepared to lay down their lives for it."<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the Arabs were ignorant, politically immature and socially disintegrated. They lacked order, and order is the law of life.

The whole world was submerged in a rough sea of darkness and chaos. Discrimination among classes was flagrant; emperors of Persia (Sassanids) claimed divinity, while those of Byzantine behaved as semi-gods. Impoverished people were conscripted to fight in the armies and to work for the nobles without knowing why they were fighting or why they were being paid less than a just wage for their work. In short, there was no justice, no liberty, no equality and no mercy. Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism were bodies without souls.

<sup>12</sup>H. G. Wells, *A Short History of the World* (Pelican Books, 1970), p. 161.

<sup>13</sup>Muhammad Rasullullah, p. 34.



## CHAPTER TWO

### MECCA AND MUHAMMAD

#### I. MECCA

Muhammad was born in Mecca (Makka) about 570 A.C.E. The city is an ancient center known for its sanctuary, the Ka'ba, and for its commercial activity throughout history. It is situated in a rugged valley along the range of the Hejaz mountains, on the caravan roads from Yemen in the south, to Syria and Iraq in the north, and from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Red Sea in the west.

##### A. ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)

Mecca is significant to Muslims both because it was the birth place of Muhammad and because the Prophet Abraham, considered to be the father of the Quraysh tribe into which Muhammad was born, lived there for a time. Because Muhammad was Abraham's descendant, Muslims call him their first father. He was the first to use the word "Muslim" to apply to all monotheists. The Muslims' version of the story of Abraham's journey to Mecca is based on the *Qur'anic* verses that describe the construction of the sanctuary known as the Ka'ba. This story narrates that Abraham, when persecuted by his people in Iraq, went to Egypt with his wife Sarah. There he was given an Egyptian slave woman, Hajar, as a present. As Sarah had not borne any children, she asked her husband to cohabit with Hajar, who gave birth to Abraham's first son, Isma'il (Ishmael). Later, Sarah also gave birth to a son, Ishaq (Isaac), after which she could not endure Hajar and her son because of false pride and jealousy. For this reason, Abraham took Hajar (who became a second wife) and her son to Mecca. Though Mecca was a rugged, rough place to live, they discovered a well which proved to have plenty of sweet water—the essence of life in the desert. The well, called

Zamzam, is still there, and is an object of religious sanctity among Muslims. It was in Mecca that Abraham was later tried by God, when he was commanded to slaughter his son. He immediately set out to obey, and the mercy of God substituted a ram for the child.<sup>1</sup> This incident is reflected in the rituals of pilgrimage performed by Muslims every year as explained in a later chapter.

For a time, Abraham left Hajar and went back to Sarah in Palestine. Meanwhile, Isma'il married a girl from Jurhum, a tribe which had once lived in Mecca, and had many children. Abraham was inspired to return to Mecca where, with Isma'il's aid, he built the "Sacred House" (al-Bayt al-Haram) or the Ka'ba, and declared it a sanctuary, a place free from idolatry.<sup>2</sup> On completion of the Ka'ba, Abraham offered a prayer to God supplicating Him to bless the new building and make it a sanctuary, to send a messenger from among the Arabs to guide Meccans, to grant the believers God's bounties and to preserve his successors against all forms of idolatry. The *Qur'an* records these prayers in beautiful verses:

"And when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the House, (Ibrahim prayed); Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower, Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us your ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.

Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise. 2: 127-29."

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 37: 83-113.

<sup>2</sup>Though Abraham built the Ka'ba for the worship of God by monotheists, it later became a shrine for idolaters who made annual pilgrimages to Mecca for the purpose of worshipping idols which were housed in the Ka'ba. It was not reclaimed for monotheists until after the advent of Islam when Muhammad purged it of idols.

Abraham beseeched God to defend the territory where the Ka'ba was built and to make his descendants revere the House and to shed on them His bounties:

"And when Ibrahim said: My Lord! Make safe this territory and preserve me and my sons from serving idols. My Lord! They have led many of mankind astray. But who followeth me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeyeth me—still Thou art Forgiving, Merciful.

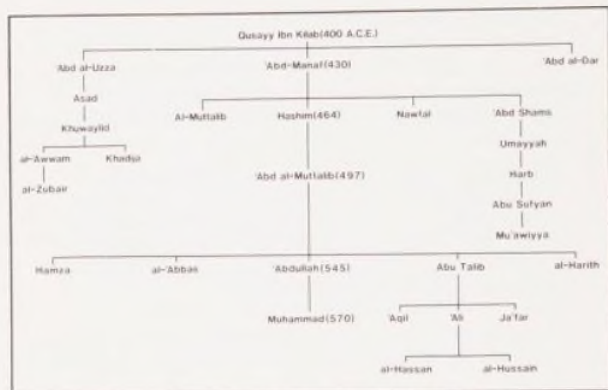
Our Lord! Lo! I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy Holy House, our Lord! that they may establish proper worship; so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them, and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful."<sup>3</sup>

God responded to Abraham's prayers and his progeny multiplied in the valley of Mecca. 'Adnan was born to Isma'il, and 'Adnan had many sons among whom was the distinguished Ma'ad. Then came Fihir Ibn Malik in the lineage of Mudhar. Mudhar was known as Quraysh, the tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged.

## B. QURAYSHITE RULE

Mecca was for quite a long time ruled by the tribe of Jurhum, then another tribe, the Khuza'a, reigned until the end of the fourth century, when a strong, intelligent chief of the Quraysh took the reins of power in his own hands. The man was Qusayy Ibn Kilab, an outstanding personality of imagination and ambition, a social reformer and a clever administrator. He is considered the founder of the Qurayshite dynasty, and he ruled as a king, but always without prejudice against Arab traditions and tribal rules. He started the construction of dwellings around the Ka'ba, encouraged commercial activities and established a semi-parliamentary system in Dar al-Nadwah (the house of consultation). Under his rule

<sup>3</sup>*Qur'an*, 14: 35-37.



Genealogy of the Quraysh Tribe

Mecca prospered. More prosperity followed during the rule of his grandson Hashim who allocated funds to feed and cater for pilgrims who came to Mecca and to help non-Qurayshites who were stricken by droughts and famines. During Hashim's rule, Mecca assumed international status as he signed friendship and peace treaties with the Roman Empire and the king of the Ghassanids. His successors followed his lead, contracting treaties with the Negus of Ethiopia and the king of Himyar (Yemen) in order to facilitate commercial transactions.

The Qurayshites' wealth increased substantially, and with their exterior trading, they could afford to have all the luxurious niceties of life at that time. Luxury brought jealousy and jealousy caused the heads of the tribe to dispute over power and the assignments of the Ka'ba. The chart shown above traces the genealogy of the Quraysh tribe.

As Qusayy kept all powers and ranks of honor in his hands and his successor, 'Abd Manaf, tried to do the same. But during the rule of the grandson, Hashim, a cousin who was a descendant of 'Abd al-Dar, contested this global authority. A war among the kinsmen was narrowly avoided by an amicable agreement whereby the ranks of honor would be divided among the cousins. Such an agreement was a wise move for Hashim who could see that any split in the tribe would enable outsiders to take over Mecca and inherit what Quraysh had labouriously built.

Hashim was succeeded by 'Abd al-Muttalib, a man known for his wisdom and action. It was he who signed treaties with Syria and Yemen by which the Quraysh got access to their respective markets. To encourage pilgrimage, he entered into agreements with all the tribes surrounding Mecca and married from their women, a token of friendship and goodwill. It was during his rule that Abraha, the Abyssinian general, tried to conquer Mecca, but retreated without a fight (as explained in chapter one). Abraha was a Christian who respected the beliefs of Arab idolaters. The Ka'ba at this time contained about three hundred idols representing all tribes' gods. Some of these idols had been brought to Mecca from Syria and Yemen.

Judaism and Christianity were not welcomed at Mecca for the simple reason that the prosperity of the city depended on the pilgrimage of idolaters. Contrary to the case in Medina (Yathrib), there were no Jewish or Christian settlements within the city. Mecca was designed in such a manner that the nobles—the heads of the Quraysh—were allowed to dwell in the nearest periphery around the Ka'ba. In the outer circle of their houses, dwellings of less important tribesmen were constructed; then came the houses of less important people from tribes other than the Quraysh. The Jews and Christians, who were mostly slaves captured in wars, lived in the furthest periphery of the town, not in the city itself.

### C. SOCIAL LIFE

The social life of the Meccans during these days was a mixture of a Byzantine-Sassanid style characterized by facts confirm that the Meccans tenaciously held to their



permissiveness and depravity and a Bedouin style characterized by chivalry, generosity, hospitality and courage. Despite the gap between the rich and the poor, there was a sense of justice among all, carrying with it respect for the wise and the learned. In fact, if there was any class distinction in the community, it was nothing more than the traditional Arab tribal distinction. Some contemporary orientalists suggest that the economic development and prosperity in Mecca late in the fifth century forced a cleavage between the rich and the middle classes. However, this point of view is not realistic as the society was essentially tribal and not economically classified. For example, there were brothers of the same social status who were quite united though some of them were poor while others were rich.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. RELIGION

The hypothesis posed by the same authors that the Meccans were seeking a better religion than paganism as a result of their economic prosperity cannot be substantiated. Historical practice of idolatry in face of the new religion, Islam, brought to them by Muhammad. They never gave up their idolatrous religion until they were militarily defeated by the Muslims. Had they really wanted an alternative to idolatry, they could have embraced either Judaism or Christianity. Both these monotheistic religions were well-known to the Arabs including the Quraysh, whose members traveled for purpose of trade to the heart of Christianity in Palestine and Syria and who had signed treaties with both Romans and Yemenites. However, the Meccans preferred their paganism and their idols, as such a religion played an important economic and political part in their lives. Pilgrims came by thousands every year to pay homage and to worship their gods in the "Sacred House"—the Ka'ba—in Mecca, and their stay activated the Meccans' commercial business and doubled their incomes. Besides, being the guardians of the Ka'ba conferred upon the

Quraysh a superiority over other tribes. They collected a considerable wealth, and wealth brought power which they exercised and enjoyed. They were not disposed to give up their luxurious way of life nor their political power for a monotheistic religion. That is why they resisted the new Islamic religion by force, as chapter three describes, and plotted to kill Muhammad when they felt that his call had attracted a considerable number of people both from within and without Mecca, and when they felt that their power was thereby threatened.

## II. MUHAMMAD

### A. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

There are many stories about the birth of Muhammad which one would find difficult to authenticate. Such stories as the ones that follow have no place whatsoever in a Muslim's belief or rituals.

One story tells of Muhammad's grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib's bargaining with God that if one more son were born to him, he would slaughter one hundred camels as a sacrifice. Another interesting story is told of Muhammad as a child. According to the tale, Muhammad at the age of three was playing with a friend when an angel came upon him, opened his chest, removed his heart, washed it, then replaced it in the boy's body and healed the wound. The playmate is said to have testified to the event. Few among ordinary individual Muslims give such stories serious consideration. None among Muslims considers them related to the creed; consequently they have no bearing on the tenets. Such stories as these cannot be compared to "the story of the star which stood over where the young child was and which is rooted in the hearts and affections of Christians".<sup>5</sup>

What is known for certain about Muhammad's childhood is reasonably ample to give a clear picture of his personal and social milieu, especially as compared to what is known of any other child born in that land at that time. We shall overlook all

<sup>4</sup>John B. Christopher, *The Islamic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 13-15.

<sup>5</sup>Alfred Guillaume, *Islam* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971) p. 23.

hagiographical narrations and be objective and factual in this context.

Muhammad was born during the days when his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, was the head of the Quraysh. His father, 'Abdullah, was a young man, rather poor but good-looking and good-mannered. 'Abdullah married Amina, the daughter of Wahb, a Medinite woman from the tribe of Zuhra, and soon after the marriage she conceived. However, during her pregnancy her husband had to leave for the north on a trading trip. While on this trip 'Abdullah died and left his widow and his child with an insignificant legacy. Muslim historians have adopted the twelfth day of Rabi' al-Awwal in the "Year of Elephant" as Muhammad's birthday.

From the chart on page 22 we can trace the genealogy of Muhammad to Qusayy Ibn Kilab. The same genealogists trace Qusayy's forefathers to Isma'il, the son of Ibrahim. The lineage is not derived from any incontestable source, though one meets with the same chain of names in all Islamic history books. There are references in the *Qur'an* and in the *Hadith* (the tradition) that indicate Muhammad was a descendant of Abraham, (*Ch. 22: 78*) and (*Ch. 56: 26*), references which are unquestionable to Muslims.

Any person familiar with the pre-Islamic history of the Arabs knows that the name "Muhammad" was very rare among the Arabs of that era. Muhammad means "praised." The boy was given his name by his grandfather who was his guardian and whose direct sons carried familiar pre-Islamic names. It is again somewhat surprising that the father of Muhammad was named "'Abdullah" meaning the servant of God, and not 'Abd Shams or 'Abd Manat—meaning the "servant of the sun" and the "servant of Manat" (an idol)! Was it mere coincidence or had Providence had some hand in it? Whatever the case might have been, Muslims believe that all events and incidences are a reflection of Providence's will.

As was the habit among the nobility of the Quraysh, newborn boys were entrusted to a suckling mother from a Bedouin tribe known for its bravery, hospitality and pure Arabic language. Muhammad was thus entrusted by his grandfather to Halima al-Sa'dya from the tribe of Banu-Sa'd which was renowned for its graceful speech and linguistic

eloquence. It was natural that wet-mothers who sought to suckle the children of the Quraysh would opt for the children of wealthy fathers. Since Muhammad's parents were relatively poor, it seems that Halima chose him when she failed to find a richer child. The story goes that she and her poor family met with good luck which eased their material conditions of life. She loved the child and requested his mother to let him stay with her for more than the usual two years of suckling. Amina agreed; so Halima kept the child for another two or three years during which time Muhammad lived a simple and quiet life, far from the corrupt atmosphere of the city. There is no doubt that this early stage of his childhood left a sense of well-being on him all his life as he always remembered it with contentment and gratitude.

When Muhammad was six years of age, his mother took him with her to Yathrib (Medina) to visit her parents and the tomb of her husband. On their way back to Mecca, Amina died, leaving the child an orphan. His grandfather took charge of him and gave him much attention and care to compensate for the loss of his parents. However, this patronage did not last long as 'Abd al-Muttalib died two years later, leaving the child to a new guardian, his paternal uncle, Abu Talib.

Abu Talib had a big family but meagre resources. Upon the death of 'Abd al-Muttalib, none among his sons could assume his position as the head of Quraysh. Consequently, the honorary Ka'ba positions were divided among the sons, and Abu Talib was put in charge of hosting the pilgrims. This office added to his financial problems and burdens, as there were no allocations for honorary offices, and the main source of income was the votive offerings to idols made by the pilgrims. While his kinsmen were successful in their trading, Abu Talib did not have that talent and gave up trading after some unsuccessful trials. Nonetheless, the man had a reputation for hospitality and kindness. His big heart accommodated his orphan nephew, giving him much affection and care. He could read the pain in the face of the child who had lost his father, mother and loving grandfather within eight years. The uncle did his best to soothe his nephew's broken heart and the two developed a strong, loving relationship. Abu Talib gave Muhammad the support of his



prestigious position as long as he lived, protecting him from the virulent attacks of his kinsmen when Muhammad started his mission.

## B. YOUTH

When Muhammad was about twelve years of age, he knew of his uncle's intention to go on a trip to Syria for trading in an effort to improve upon his financial situation. Abu Talib did not want to expose the child to the inconveniences and dangers of such a long, tiring journey, but Muhammad persistently begged to join him, and he finally agreed. The trip was a new experience to the child as it gave him the chance to observe different lands, different peoples, and different beliefs. Here again a famous story is related about Muhammad's encounter with a certain monk called "Buhaira" who, the story goes, could see signs of prophethood in the boy's face. Some writers believe that Muhammad learned a lot from this monk and from other monotheists that he met on this journey, a knowledge that contributed to his new religion. This story is a sort of hagiography as it has no authoritative backing. As for the child's learning, he definitely would have acquired some knowledge of what he had seen and met, but it would be unrealistic to assume that a child at the age of twelve would be able to discriminate between Christianity and Judaism or to assimilate the philosophies of these religions, which were the main monotheistic religions of that time. It can be said that the trip educated him, opened his mind to new issues concerning man and life, and made him aware of other religions previously unknown to him. There is every evidence that the boy was extremely intelligent, gentle and agreeable, but that does not mean, as some writers would have it, that he could synthesize a new religion. It seems that Abu Talib's trip was not successful and the man did not try his luck again. He settled in Mecca, content with what he had.

Another experience important to Muhammad's development was his participation in a war between the Quraysh and another tribe called the Hawazin. This intermittent war, which lasted for four years, started when he was about fifteen years of age. The war ended with a

compromise, but it showed that the Quraysh was suffering from lack of leadership after the death of 'Abd al-Muttalib. The mere fact that a distant tribe like the Hawazin would dare to declare war on the Quraysh was a symptom of the latter's dwindling prestige. This feeling induced the Quraysh and its adjacent allies to conclude a pact called "Hilf ul-Fudhul" whereby all tribes pledged to repulse any unjust aggression and to help establish justice whenever it was violated. Muhammad was present when this pact was agreed to and praised it during the time of his prophethood.

Muhammad's choice of occupation as a youth was also an important factor in his development. When his uncle urged him at the age of fifteen to earn his own living, he opted to become a shepherd. Owners of herds quickly recognized him to be a vigilant shepherd and entrusted him with their sheep. This occupation gave him the time to meditate about complicated questions of life such as the problem of divinity and creation, the relationship between man and the creative power, the genuineness of the divinity of idols and similar matters. There is no record of Muhammad's ideas at that early stage of his maturity, but historians tell us about his bewilderment and uneasiness regarding the worship of idols. An elderly "Hanif"<sup>6</sup> once upbraided him for eating meat that was originally sacrificed for an idol. Muhammad was reported as saying later in his life, "After that (upbraiding), I never knowingly stroked one of their idols nor did I sacrifice to them; then God honored me with His apostleship."<sup>7</sup>

During this period, somehow, Muhammad proved himself and was known to Meccans as a serene and chaste young man. He rarely attended meetings where any profane activity took place, nor did he mix with those who indulged either in luxury or in laxity. This upright character, added to his conscientious behaviour and dealings, earned him the attribute of "Al-Amin", meaning "the honest and trustworthy". Most probably his sad childhood conferred upon Muhammad a sort of gentleness, modesty and shyness

<sup>6</sup>The Hanifs were a group of monotheists who acknowledged Judaism and Christianity as true religions but disapproved of the religious practices of their adherents at that time.

<sup>7</sup>Guillaume, p. 26.

which checked him from slipping into debauchery and profanity. Modest he was, but not an introvert. Being mature for his age and serene preserved him from the sort of amusements that his peers indulged in and savored.

### C. MARRIAGE

Abu Talib had aspirations for his intelligent nephew and watched for an opportunity that would both ease Muhammad's life and prepare him for a worthy position in the society. He learned that Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid,—a distant cousin and a noble, rich Qurayshite lady—was looking for somebody to trade in her money. She was a widow who had inherited a sizable fortune which she invested in partnership with her father. On the death of the latter, she started engaging men to do the business—mainly to travel in caravans carrying different commodities to and from Mecca. She turned down many proposals for marriage, as she felt, considering her age of about forty, that men were more interested in her money than in herself.

Abu Talib arranged for the engagement of Muhammad as an active business partner to Khadija, and the young man immediately prepared himself for the journey to Syria, happy and hopeful about his future. He was quite successful in his trading missions, and again proved his honesty and good character. Despite his poverty, and the fact that he was much younger than she (Muhammad was 25), Khadija loved Muhammad and wanted him as a husband:

"...at this stage, people must have been struck by his intelligence, and his calm, confident and balanced manner of conducting himself both in his own affairs and in his dealings with others. It was probably this quality which led Khadija Khuwaylid...to engage him in her employ."<sup>8</sup>

It is evident that Khadija developed deep feelings of affection towards Muhammad, not only because of his distinguished behavior as a business partner, but also

because of his gently protective manhood, his delicate and chaste manners and his extraordinarily attractive personality. She was a lonely woman and, in her society, a protective husband was a social requirement for respectability and esteem. Muhammad fit the requirement as he came from a noble family of the same Qurayshite tribe, and was highly appreciated by all. There is evidence in Muhammad's sayings that he really loved Khadija—a genuine love that survived even after her death. The way they shared their lives also indicated that they really loved each other. She trusted him without a shade of doubt, and he confided in her his most guarded secrets, doubts and thoughts. After the marriage Muhammad continued to trade in partnership with his wife, thus accumulating a modest wealth of his own.

How many times Muhammad went to Syria for business after his marriage is not recorded in his biography. However, his marriage provided him with some significant elements that greatly influenced his life both before and after he received the Revelation. He was no longer under the duress of poverty, concerned about his livelihood. He enjoyed some material and emotional security that lent him more prudence and helped him acquire more prestige in his society. He savored the fulfillment of his married life with a loving wife who bore him four daughters and three sons. His daughters were Zainab, Roqayya, Um Kalthum, and Fatima, all of whom lived and married during his lifetime. The first three died before him and the fourth died shortly after his death. The sons died in their early infancy. When he first met with the experience of Revelation, he sought help and refuge in his trusting and trustworthy wife. When he was ordained to publicly invite his people to the new religion and was met with indignation and resistance, he sought encouragement and support from his believing and steadfast spouse whom he never forgot until the day he died.

### D. PRE-REVELATION YEARS

History leaves us only scanty information about Muhammad during the twelve or fifteen years before the Revelation. The most outstanding occurrence of this period

<sup>8</sup>Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1974), p. 49.



took place when Muhammad was about 35 years of age. His biographers relate that the leaders of the Quraysh decided to rebuild the walls of the Ka'ba which had fallen into disrepair. When the time came to put the "Black Stone"<sup>9</sup> in its place, the four leading Qurayshite families laid claim to the honor of handling it. After a heated dispute as to which family head should have the privilege, they agreed to accept as arbiter the first man to come upon the scene. It happened that Muhammad was that first man, and after listening to them, he sent for a cloak, raised the Stone alone, placed it on the cloak, asked the head of each family to raise the cloak from one corner, and finally fixed the Stone in its place on the building. His action was greatly appreciated and was met with admiration and satisfaction.

Another story speaks of Muhammad's anxiety and spiritual restlessness. He learned through his journeys to the north about Christianity and Judaism, yet he was not totally convinced by their teachings. He could never compromise his logic with idolatry and paganism. He contacted the "Hanifs", sympathized with them, but did not identify himself with them. He resented the worship of stones and matter, denied the principle of a superior Jewish race, and could not agree with the idea of the "Trinity" or the philosophy of monasticism. In the wake of his doubt, he resorted to meditation in seclusion, a practice which was not infrequent at that time. His limited material needs were easily met by his limited resources, and he felt free to spend the major part of his time meditating without the encumbrance of work for his livelihood. Most probably, such a seclusive life extended over the few years preceding the Revelation. However, this spiritual anxiety, this persistent desire to know more about

the creation, this seclusion and deliberation were never reflected in any form of abnormality, either in Muhammad's treatment of his family and kin or in his behavior toward his peers and fellowmen.

The non-Muslim writer Maxime Rodinson writes that in his pre-Revelation years Muhammad:

"...gave the impression of a sensible, deliberate and well-balanced man. All his life we find him thinking before taking a decision, conducting his public and private business efficiently, knowing when to bide his time and when to retract, and capable of taking the necessary action to ensure the success of his plans."<sup>10</sup>

But Rodinson's further interpretation, that the sobriety and equanimity of Muhammad in his first twenty-five years when he suffered orphanage and poverty were superficial and constituted a prelude to a latent psychic disturbance, is unacceptable. His contention that Muhammad's easy life from the age of twenty-five until the age of forty fostered in him an inherent desire for supremacy and, instead of alleviating his agony, it kindled more fire within his heart, disposing him to a nervous crisis of some pathological kind,<sup>11</sup> is clearly a reference to the experience of the Revelation during which Muhammad would sometime appear unconscious, perspire profusely and claim to hear and see the Angel Gabriel. Rodinson's attempt to dismiss Muhammad's experience of the Revelation as a pathological episode has, unfortunately been made by other non-Muslim writers as well. The best response to such a position comes from the Christian orientalist, John Christopher:

"Until recently many non-Muslims dismissed Muhammad's alleged religious experiences as the convulsions of an epileptic, or the outbursts of a hysterical person, or the fraudulent, self-induced

<sup>9</sup>This is a meteorite stone, rare in the Arabian peninsula, which is supposed to have been found at an early age and was inserted in a corner of the Ka'ba. Pre-Islamic Meccans considered it sacred for no obvious reason. Muslims kept it in its place and used it as a sign for starting their seven tours around the Ka'ba during their pilgrimage ritual. There is no evidence whatsoever in Islamic texts that Muhammad considered it sacred or related any religious significance to it.

<sup>10</sup>Rodinson, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup>Rodinson, p. 53.



episodes of an opportunist. In the light of modern medical and psychological knowledge, such views no longer appear very tenable. Epileptics, for example, have no memory of what has occurred during their attacks, whereas Muhammad gave vivid reports of what happened to him. Moreover, the very symptoms which used to be thought indicative of Muhammad's epilepsy are now considered quite compatible with intense religious excitement—convulsive movements during his seizures, foam on his lips, profuse sweating even on a cold day, complaints of hearing the clanking of chains or the ringing of bells. Do these symptoms suggest the delusions of hysteria? Most scholars today think not. It is conjectured that Muhammad seldom had visions after his initial experience, nor did he necessarily hear an actual voice relaying to him the full text of a divine message. Many a revelation apparently came to Muhammad as a sudden intuition, a flash of inspiration, an idea implanted by the Angel Gabriel rather than a word-by-word communication. The accounts of Muhammad's prolonged and anguished doubts over the source of his messages argue very strongly in favor of his sincerity. The perpetrator of a fraud could hardly have invented the crisis that engulfed Muhammad after his first revelation, when, fearing that an evil jinni had taken possession of him, he contemplated suicide. Sustained by the sympathy of Khadija, and gradually reassured by further revelations, he became convinced after many months had passed that he had indeed been chosen to be the Prophet or Messenger of Allah."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>John Christopher, *The Islamic Tradition* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 19-20.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MESSAGE IN MECCA AND THE EMIGRATION (HIJRA)

#### I. THE FIRST REVELATION

When Muhammad received his first revelation in July, 610 A.C.E. and became aware that God had chosen him to be a prophet transmitting to humanity the same monotheistic belief declared by previous prophets, he immediately set out upon his mission. He was quite aware that the nobility of Mecca would not approve of his new religion, if only because it would jeopardize their vested economic interests as well as undermine their political privileges. So he went calmly, with deliberate discretion, secretly inviting his most intimate friends and kin to follow him.

#### A. CONVERSION OF FRIENDS AND KIN

The first person who believed in him was his devout wife, Khadija, who gave him both moral and material support. His second convert was most probably his young cousin, 'Ali, who was actually living under Muhammad's guardianship. The third believer, Zayd, had been a slave whom Muhammad bought and immediately freed, adopting him as a son. But the fourth believer, a very important figure, was not a member of the family but an intimate friend of Muhammad and a respectable head of the Quraysh, a trader and a man of esteem and trustworthiness. This friend, Abu Bakr, immediately believed Muhammad, because through all their lives he had never heard Muhammad tell a lie and because the message in its essence seemed to him so impersonal, so logical and so special that he willingly joined the new faith. Every early Muslim convert worked on his entourage with great caution and discretion, quietly trying to invite others to join the

## B. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REVELATION

At that time, the Revelation was mainly concerned with issues at the core of every monotheistic religion: the *oneness* of the Creator. The Islamic concept, as revealed, depended entirely on the cogent reasoning and linguistic eloquence of the Revelation.

### 1. Cogent Reasoning

God, in His early revealed verses of the Holy Book, the *Qur'an*, exhorts idolaters to think about the first cause of life. He asks them to deliberate on the laws of existence. For instance, He asks them who created this universe, who formed the clouds and caused rain to fall, who ordained a seed to grow and bear fruit, who created an embryo and arranged for its growth...etc.<sup>1</sup> The answer to these questions was clear to any fair mind—behind the whole creation there is one single, absolute, infinite, conscious, highly organized, omnipotent, omniscient and all knowledgeable Power. This Power created humans and everything in the cosmos, and made laws to control the whole creation and to keep it in balance. Man is God's highest creation endowed with a Trust (*Amanat*) which is perception, will,<sup>2</sup> awareness and free choice. God made man his vicegerent on earth to worship Him, that is to find out God's laws of existence and follow them. The *Qur'anic* verses explicitly underscore the fact that God did not create the world and its people in vain<sup>3</sup> but for a purpose—whether man is aware of that purpose or not. Man is created to fulfill a certain function and to act in a certain way so that the purpose of existence is achieved. Accordingly, Muhammad and his few followers tried hard to divert people from the humiliating practice of worshipping idols to the transforming practice of worshipping God. Of course, the idea was not entirely a novelty. As stated in chapter one, there were many

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 6: 104-109 and 27: 60-65.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 3, 6: 165, 35: 39.

<sup>3</sup>*Qur'an*, 21: 16.

monotheists scattered over the Arabian Peninsula, among them the Byzantine Orthodox and other Christian sects, as well as Jews. In chapter two there was a mention of the Hanifs, those who believed in God but who might have chosen not to confess either Christianity or Judaism. Nevertheless, the worship of idols was deeply rooted in the tradition of the Arabs in general and of the Meccans in particular. It is important to note that religious traditions among the Arabs had been a mixture of social tradition and personal feelings (conscience), in other words, a mixture of what the tribe ruled as right behavior and what the individual tribesman's conscience might have judged to be right behavior. When tribal tradition might be in conflict with personal judgment, the Arab always viewed tradition as superior to his own conscience. This is well illustrated by many tribes' adherence to the tradition of killing new-born female babies whose birth, it was believed, could cause shame or poverty to befall the family, although it is clear that such a practice contradicts the most basic instinct in life. Such traditions made it difficult for Muslims to convert pagans to the new religion.

### 2. Linguistic Eloquence

The influence of language on the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era was explained in some detail in chapter one. Here we see that Muhammad brought his mission to them in a superb Arabic which no other user of the language could ever match. We read in the history of Islam about many eminent converts who embraced the religion the moment they heard the language of the *Qur'an*, moved by its unique, inimitable style, rich vocabulary, melodious rhythm, and prolific connotations. Many idolaters, and monotheists as well, asked Muhammad to prove his prophethood by showing them a miracle as other prophets had done before him. His response to their request was that he was only a man reciting this miraculous language which nobody could ever match and revealing simple facts which nobody could refute.<sup>4</sup> This book was Muhammad's only miracle. Those who believed took the *Qur'anic* verses to their hearts and were guided by their light

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 89-93.



and wisdom. So eloquent was the language that on many occasions some of Muhammad's adversaries who were bent on harming him were taken aback upon hearing him recite these miraculous verses.

The *Qur'an* was revealed bit by bit for a period of twenty-three years. Different verses came in response to a quest for laws to be applied in particular circumstances. Primarily it was a book having the determined and clearly defined theme of confirming the absolute strict *oneness* of the Creator and the inevitability of man's following the eternal divine laws of existence. The *Qur'an* is discussed in detail in a later chapter.

### C. DEFINITION OF PROPHETHOOD

To understand the *Qur'an* one must understand the essence of prophethood. In Islamic terminology there are two words—a prophet (*Nabi*) and a messenger or apostle (*Rasul*). A prophet is a man chosen and inspired by God to revive a divine message previously communicated by God. Thus, a prophet brings a repetition or a reminder of what has already been revealed. Throughout the ages God had endowed prophets with some extra power so as to prove to their people their prophethood and the genuineness of divine communication. Both the Arabic word *Nabi* and the English word *prophet* connote the power of seeing the future, and that power was one attribute of a prophet. However, there were other individuals throughout the ancient world who had, or at least who claimed, such power. In some cases, such an individual having prophetic power was called a *Kahin* (Prognosticator); in other cases he was called the *Sha'ir* (poet) and in others he was named *Nabi*, the Islamic word for prophet. The only difference between the first two and *Nabi* is that a genuine prophet would correctly ascertain the future while others are conjecturers whose foretelling might prove either false or coincidentally true.

An apostle (*Rasul*) is a person chosen by God to bring a new message delineating some social order, imposing some restrictions, allowing some liberalities, or orienting the society toward a better state of life. Every *Rasul* is supposed to be a *Nabi* for the simple reason that in his message the idea of

God's *oneness* is inherent—an idea which all those who have had any contact with God never failed to communicate to human beings. Definitely Muhammad was a *Rasul* whose message was so comprehensive that it entailed every aspect of human life. Because the essence of this message is discussed later in some detail, it is sufficient to say here that Muhammad was concerned with the simple principle of the integral, indivisible, infinite, *oneness* of God. Muhammad was met with some resistance not only from idolaters but from both Jews and Christians also. The Jews didn't like Muhammad's acknowledging Jesus as a prophet born as a result of immaculate conception, nor did they condone his great respect for Christianity. The Christians did not tolerate his denial of the principle of the Trinity or his confirmation that Jesus was a human being. Both Jews and Christians believed that there would be no prophet to succeed their own; consequently most of them disbelieved Muhammad and took a belligerent attitude toward his new message.

### II. PUBLIC MISSION IN MECCA 613-621 A.C.E.

After three years of discreet propagation of Islam in Mecca, a revelation came in 613 A.C.E. ordering Muhammad to speak publicly, inviting everybody in Mecca to embrace the new religion of God. At first he was not taken very seriously and was even ridiculed. Gradually, however, he converted a few nobles of the Quraysh, some middle class people, and quite a number of slaves and poor people. Amazingly enough, most of his adherents were pilgrims from tribes living around Mecca and in remote areas rather than from Mecca itself.

#### A. ANIMOSITY TOWARD MUSLIMS

The Qurayshites began to consider Muhammad dangerous when he publicly condemned their beliefs, talking critically about their gods and actually attacking the whole religious concept of idolatry. Having observed many other tribes listening to him and joining his religion, the Qurayshites realized that their economic, religious, and political situation was threatened. In a meeting of the tribal leaders, it was

decided to stop Muhammad even by force, if necessary.<sup>5</sup> Such a decision could not be acted upon without the consent of Banu Hashem—the tribe of Muhammad—whose chieftain was his uncle Abu Talib. But Abu Talib vetoed the decision, and because of his influence, the other tribes could not inflict direct personal harm on Muhammad. However, they carried out a vigorous campaign of torture and persecution of individual Muslims who had no patronage or protection, particularly the slaves. Muhammad himself was insulted and ridiculed in public. The pressure was so great on the Muslims that in 614 A.C.E. Muhammad advised those who could not find refuge from persecution to migrate to Ethiopia. The first group of emigrants was composed of eleven men and four women. A few months later, when the news reached Muhammad that the emigrants were well received by the Christian Emperor, another group of eighty-three men and eighteen women left Mecca for Ethiopia.

The situation in Mecca, the center of so much persecution of the Muslims, seemed to improve for Muhammad and his followers when some of Muhammad's relatives and other persons of influence in the city converted to Islam. Hamza, an uncle, true to his sense of tribal affinity, denounced the humiliation of his nephew by other tribal chieftains and professed Islam in defiance of his own brother, Abu Jahl. That great feat lent substantial moral support to the Muslims. Another significant addition to the new religion was the conversion of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, a man of great influence and power in Mecca, who had been a formidable enemy of Muhammad. Upon hearing his sister recite some verses from the *Qur'an*, 'Umar was moved to embrace Islam, publicly challenging non-believers.<sup>6</sup> Muslim emigrants who had fled to Ethiopia heard about such conversions and decided to come back to Mecca under the impression that conditions there had

indeed improved for Muslims, but they were mistaken.<sup>7</sup>

Muhammad's passive resistance, added to his success in gaining more believers, put the Meccan idolaters in a critical situation. They tried to negotiate an agreement with Abu Talib whereby Muhammad would stop inviting people to the new religion in exchange for being appointed head of the Quraysh. Muhammad refused any deals and reiterated his claim of prophethood. Once more, his uncle took his side and allowed Muhammad to continue his mission under his patronage. The Quraysh then decided to boycott the Banu Hashim and the Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib, abstaining from dealing with any of them in any way, including trade and marriage. The boycott was written in a parchment and was hung on a wall in the Ka'ba to give it sanction and sacrosanctity. The boycott continued for about three years, from the seventh to the tenth year, during which time, 617-620 A.C.E., the Muslims and the few sympathetic pagans from the two above-mentioned families were almost besieged in an arid area called "Sh'eb Abi Talib" in the outskirts of Mecca. They suffered from a lack of water, food and decent dwelling, but they stood their ordeal with laudible forbearance and unshakeable faith. Led by Muhammad, they would intercept

<sup>5</sup>It is important to note here that many orientalists explain the return of the emigrants on the basis of an erroneous idea which is entirely contrary to the idea of God's *oneness*, which is basic to Islam. They allege that Muhammad, under distress of persecution, tried to compromise with the Meccan idolaters by praising their idols, inserting some verses in the *Qur'an* to that effect. Such an allegation is unacceptable to anybody who knows any Arabic, because the words ascribed to Muhammad indicate that after mentioning the names of the gods Lat, Uzza, and Manat, he praised them and attributed to them the power of intercession with God. The context of the verses cannot be so interpreted. The verses read:

" Have you seen Lat, and 'Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manat? What! For you, the male sex, and for Him, the female? Behold such would be indeed a division most unfair. These are nothing but names which ye have devised—ye and your fathers—for which God has sent down no authority (whatever). They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire."

This narrative is known in Islamic history by "The Story of Gharaneeq" or "The Goddesses". For more detail, see M. H. Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1976), p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>Muhammad met them during pilgrimage and concluded with them an agreement called the first "al-Quaba Allegiance" which is discussed on pages 117-8.

<sup>6</sup>This man became one of Muhammad's closest companions and was elected the second Khalifa (caliph) after Abu Bakr who was referred to on page 36. However, neither of these conversions nor other positive events put an end to the persecutions.



pagans on pilgrimages and invite them to Islam. They had an encouraging response; consequently, the number of Muslims was continuously on the increase.

Finally, some Meccans realized that the boycott did not achieve what was expected of it, while it exposed the injustice of the Quraysh before all the tribes who came to Mecca for pilgrimage or trade. A strong feeling of resentment and indignation against the ban put an end to the boycott and the parchment was torn into pieces. Once again Muhammad and his followers were free to move and to resume their mission, though under more individual persecution than before. In fact, the ban on Muslims was raised with the clear understanding that all Muslims who had no protectors would be tortured until they turned away from their new faith.

#### B. DEATH OF MUHAMMAD'S WIFE AND UNCLE

During the tenth year, 620 A.C.E., things had become worse for Muhammad as he lost first his beloved, caring and trusting wife. One month after her death, his protector and guardian uncle Abu Talib died, thus exposing him to the wrath of the Quraysh. He was frequently harassed, physically attacked and publicly slandered. His followers were atrociously persecuted and killed, but he never reacted with violence, nor did he allow the Muslims to strike back. On the contrary, he resorted to peace, hoping thereby to gain more converts and to establish a favorable public opinion. To this end, he went to al-Ta'if, the stronghold of a tribe called Tha'if, about fifty miles to the southeast of Mecca. He did not meet with any luck, but instead was roughly treated by the leaders of the tribe. The news quickly reached the Quraysh, and Muhammad was forbidden to re-enter Mecca until one of his heads declared his patronage to him.

#### C. CONVERSION OF MEDINA PILGRIMS

During the pilgrimage season of the tenth year, 620 A.C.E., Muhammad achieved success in convincing some twelve chieftains from Medina—a community some 260 miles north of Mecca—to accept Islam. These twelve persons were so sincere in their belief that when they returned to their home

from their pilgrimage, they were able to convince the majority of their tribe, the al-Khazraj, to adopt the new religion. That was a good omen for Muslims and a sign of a new hope amid their ordeals, as Medina was the second most important town after Mecca, rich in planations and handicrafts. It commanded the strategic position on the commercial route between the north and the south of Arabia. Its population was composed of two big Arab tribes, the al-Aws and the al-Khazraj, and several Jewish settlements within the city and around it. The Arab tribes had originally come from Yemen and settled in Medina as they found it abounded with water and pasture. The city itself is well fortified by high mountains surrounding it from the south, the east and the west. As a matter of historical fact, it was never conquered while these two tribes occupied it.

#### D. THE ASCENSION (AL-ISRA' AND AL-MI'RAJ)

In this tenth year (620 A.C.E.) and after his disappointing visit to al-Ta'if, Muhammad met with a new prophetic experience. He told his people that he went with the Angel Gabriel during the night to Sinai where he met with Moses, then to Jerusalem where he met with Abraham, Jesus and other prophets and offered a prayer with them. That was his Isra' (meaning travelling at night). Then Gabriel ascended with him into heaven (al-Mi'raj) where he received from God instructions regarding prayers that were to become a ritual for Muslims.

The story of the ascension is related in the biographies of Muhammad in different versions, many of which are not authentic. It was described in the *Qur'an* as follows:

"Glory to (God) Who did take His servnt for a journey by night from the sacred mosque to the furthest mosque, whose presence We did bless in order that We might show him some of Our signs: for He is the One who heareth and seeth all things.\*...Behold! We

\**Qur'an*, 14: 1.

told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind round about: We granted the vision which We showed thee, but as a trial for men."<sup>9</sup>

There is also a Hadith related on the authority of Umm Hani', a cousin of the Prophet in whose place Muhammad spent that night. She said:

"The Prophet of God spent the night in my quarters. He recited his night prayers and went to sleep. Just before dawn the Prophet of God awoke us and we all prayed the dawn prayer together. When the prayer was through, he said O Umm Hani, I prayed with you the night prayer in this place, then I went to Jerusalem and I prayed there, and as you see, I have just finished praying with you the dawn prayer.' I answered O Prophet of God, do not tell this to the people for they will not believe you and harm you. He said, By God, I shall tell them."<sup>10</sup>

Muslims celebrate this experience which took place on the twenty-seventh of Ramadan.<sup>11</sup> It confirms their belief in the *oneness* of God and that all religions have the same basic creed. Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and all other prophets are acknowledged by Muslims. In addition, the experience itself confirms two Islamic principles:

1. The cosmos is a unity created by God and is accessible to man.
2. The source of knowledge is not confined to human rational and empirical experience. Man has an inherent spiritual power which, if rightly developed, can add to his knowledge and guide him.

When Muhammad told his experience to the Meccans, non-believers ridiculed him, some believers doubted him, while true believers believed him. And that was a trial for all. There

<sup>9</sup>Qur'an, 17: 60.

<sup>10</sup>Haykal, pp. 139-140.

<sup>11</sup>Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar year.

is no mention that Muhammad physically made the journey, nor was it mentioned that it was a vision that is, generally speaking, as trustworthy and factual as a physical vision. To argue the matter is futile, though it engaged the attention of many biographers in both the East and the West.<sup>12</sup>

#### *E. PLEDGE WITH MEDINA CONVERTS (BAY'AT AL-'AQABA)*

In the year 621 A.C.E., the eleventh after the Revelation, Muhammad concluded a second agreement with Muslim converts from Medina who came to perform pilgrimage. He asked their pledge that they would not associate anything with God in their worship, would not rob others or commit adultery or fornication, would not kill their own children, would not defend a falsehood or a lie, and would not disobey God in anything which was benign and good. This agreement was called the first Bay'at al-'Aqaba, meaning the first pledge in 'Aqaba, a place near Mecca. The terms of the agreement were so strikingly acceptable that when the converts went back to Medina they had no difficulty in persuading other Medinites to embrace Islam. That was particularly so because wars between the two tribes and their respective Jewish allies had exhausted their human and material resources and they were anxious to lead a peaceful life. Islamic teachings of love and brotherhood appealed to them and saved their primitive Bedouin pride from the shame of giving up their rancour and vengeance. Those who met with Muhammad were enthusiastic about handing over the rule of the city to him. Those who had just accepted Islam acquiesced, expecting a better and more peaceful life. Even the Jews were looking forward to a new ally who believed in their one God and who talked laudibly about Moses, their prophet. During the twelfth year after the Revelation, when again a large number of pilgrims from Medina came to Mecca, a more specific treaty was concluded between Muhammad and the chieftains of the two big tribes, the al-Aws and the al-Khazraj. Seventy three men and two women gave Muhammad allegiance and vowed

<sup>12</sup>Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi, *Islam* (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1979), pp. 41-44.



to stand by him as allies, defending him as they defended their own families. When they agreed, he declared: "I am from you and you are from me; I shall fight whom you fight and I shall make peace with whom you make peace."<sup>13</sup>

Despite the great effort of the Quraysh to stop Muslims from emigrating, most of them were able to get away unharmed, while many were caught and tortured, and others were denied the privilege of taking their spouses with them. The majority abandoned their fortunes and homes to the Meccans.

### III. THE HIJRA

Muhammad and only a very few adherents remained in Mecca; nobody knew whether he intended to stay there and continue his preaching as usual, inviting all tribes to Islam, or whether he would join the Muslims in Medina. Both possibilities caused anxiety to the Meccans who saw that Islam could destroy their social order and economic prosperity. The equality which prevailed among Muslims, the fraternity, the emancipation from slavery, the respect for women, and above all the abolition of class distinctions, meant a complete change in the social order which the Meccans had long cherished. Moreover, it was clear that if Muhammad succeeded in proselytizing Arabs, there would be no idols to be worshipped and the whole clerical system of the Ka'ba would cease to exist. If no more pilgrim idolators came to the Ka'ba, the main source of their livelihood would dry up.

#### A. THE PLOT TO KILL MUHAMMAD

The heads of the various clans of the Quraysh held a meeting but could find no solution to this problem except to kill this man who could cause dissention among families and tribes and convert people from their established religion to a new one. Fearing the retaliation of 'Abd al-Muttalib's clan to which Muhammad belonged, they agreed to choose from each of the other clans and tribes a representative young warrior,

who would then band together to kill Muhammad. This conspiracy could not be kept secret, so it was not long before the Prophet heard of it. He was disturbed by the plot mainly because he had no intention or desire to wage a war, especially against his own people. He only wanted them to allow him to exercise his human right of expressing his views. During the thirteen years he had spent in Mecca, nobody had embraced Islam under coercion and no compulsion whatsoever had been exercised to convince any person of the Islamic faith. This peaceful, humane attitude, benign as it was, perturbed the leaders of Mecca more than if Muhammad had resorted to some violence to win converts. So they declared him a menace and decided to get rid of him.

#### B. EMIGRATION TO MEDINA

Muhammad was able to guess the exact date when the idolators would come to kill him. The story goes that on July 15/16, 622 A.C.E., he put his cousin, Ali, in his bed, slipped out of his own house, went to the home of his intimate friend, Abu Bakr, and with him went to Medina, using an unusual route which the Meccans would not have anticipated. When the Meccans discovered that Muhammad had departed and joined his followers in Medina, they declared a state of war—confiscating the fortunes of the Muslims, even arresting the wives of the emigrants, detaining all Muslims who had not yet emigrated, and prepared themselves for an attack which they hoped would put an end to this nascent religious movement. The Medinite Muslims knew that Muhammad had left Mecca, but they didn't know where he had gone. After a few weeks Muhammad entered Medina where he was welcomed with tremendous joy. The Islamic spirit which had prevailed in the two previous years eradicated the deep enmity between the two big tribes living in that city (the al-Aws and the al-Khazraj) and between their respective Jewish allies. The Medinites felt that under Muhammad's leadership they could lead a more peaceful and prosperous life than ever before. In fact, everybody was hopeful of a new era, though nobody had a clear idea about what the new state of affairs there would be. The Jews who were also happy, feeling that a monotheist religion would be more appropriate for them to coexist with,

<sup>13</sup>Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Muhammad Rasulullah* (Luknow, India: Islamic Research & Publication, 1979), p. 146.

joined the chorus in welcoming Muhammad to Medina.

### C. A NEW START AT MEDINA

Muhammad's first task in Medina, which he immediately set out to accomplish, was to organize a community of believers. Driven by the spirit of Islam which sees all humans as equal and interdependent, Muhammad established a fraternal community whereby every emigrant from Mecca would share and fraternize with one of the Muslim residents of Medina. This declaration of fraternity in faith produced a miraculous phenomenon which is unequaled in the history of mankind. The Medinite Muslims offered to share their wealth with the emigrants. Some of them even offered his brother from Mecca the choice of one of his wives if the Medinite had more than one. Such a spirit of brotherhood consolidated the new society and established it upon a foundation much different from the blood kinship and tribal loyalty that characterized non-Muslim Arab communities. The prophet also declared that every member of the new society, in fact all human beings, had the right to think and to worship whatever he believed to be worthy of thought and worship. As was characteristic of Muhammad, he immediately took steps to transform this philosophy into action. Accordingly, he concluded a treaty of friendship with the Jewish tribes living in Medina and its environs, especially the Banu Qurayza, the Banu Nadheer, and the Banu Qaynuqa'. These tribes had not been living together in peace, but were practically at war with each other.

Dr. Wellthenson, a Jewish author, is quoted as saying:

"The Bani Qaynuqa' were set against the rest of the Jews because they had sided with the al-Khazraj in the battle of Bu'ath in which the Bani al-Nadir and the Bani Qurayza had inflicted a crushing defeat on the Bani Qaynuqa' even though the latter had paid bloodwit for their prisoners of war. The bitterness between the Jewish tribes continued to persist after the battle of Bu'ath. When the Bani Qaynuqa'

subsequently fell out with the Ansar, no other Jewish tribe came to their aid against the Ansar."<sup>14</sup>

The treaty with the Jews gave them exactly the same civil rights and conferred upon them the same civil obligations as Muslims had. The treaty actually stipulated, "they entered the community along with Muslims." Yet the orientalist Guillaume makes contradictory statements regarding the equality of persons in Medina under Muhammad's treaties.<sup>15</sup>

It should be apparent that Muhammad did not conquer Medina by the sword, nor did he usurp political power. A few years before his arrival, he had started a radical, peaceful revolution whose tenets the majority of the population had embraced. Once instated there, he was not only a *Nabi* or a *Rasul* like Abraham or Jesus, but also the ideal example of a statesman and a social reformer. He was inspired to show mankind how to put into practice divine values, making of them living rules and regulations by whose observance the individual and the society could enjoy balance and harmony. Under Muhammad's leadership, a new political organization was formed in which the land had recognized boundaries and the people had a common ideology, language and interests, under a benign and beloved sovereign. This political aspect of the community of Medina is discussed in a later chapter. Muhammad, as the new head of state, wanted to acquire the utmost security in this early period of statehood. All around Medina there were pagan tribes who could cause him trouble and engage Muslims in futile wars or, worse, join their enemies in Mecca. He did not try to attack them militarily, though he was definitely in a stronger position. Instead, he concluded treaties of peace and alliance with them by means

<sup>14</sup>Al-Yahud fi Bilad al-'Arab p. 129. Quoted from Al-Nadwi, p. 160.

<sup>15</sup>Guillaume states in his book, (*Islam* pp. 40-1), "all those who refused to believe in Islam must be quelled. Idolators whose very existence was an insult to the one true God would have to accept Islam or the sword; other monotheists would have to acknowledge their inferiority by paying a special tax." He contradicts this point to correctly allow that, "various Jewish tribes are mentioned by name as sharing in this character as a community along with Muslims while retaining their own religion. They were guaranteed the same privileges and were under the same financial and other obligations as the Muslims."



of which both parties would fight any third party that might attack them. He did not forbid them to continue their practice of idolatry, nor did he acquiesce to the practice. Rather, he reconfirmed his major principle of freedom of thought, keeping the door open to propagate Islam by conversion and peaceful means. Such treaties, which are considered some of the earliest elaborate documents of international law, served their purpose well. Meccans tried too late to mobilize the pagan tribes against the Muslims, while Islam steadily spread among these dispersed tribes who could see how Medina was prospering and challenging the traditional role of Mecca as the dominant city.

#### *D. DECLARATION TO THE JEWISH TRIBES IN MEDINA*

For the Jewish tribes living in Medina, Muhammad promulgated a declaration determining their status as citizens and defining their rights and obligations. This declaration laid the cornerstone of the political, judicial, and social life of all the citizens of the nascent city-state. It had such far-reaching consequences that many modern writers call it the "Constitution of Medina." It was issued as a covenant from Muhammad to all Medinites without exception and comprised, among others, the following stipulations:

1. "...the believers and the Muslims of the Quraysh, Yathrib, and those who followed them, joined them, and fought with them...constitute one Ummah (meaning community or nation) to the exclusion of all other men." All Jewish tribes of Medina were mentioned by name as a part of this covenant.
2. "Any Jew who follows us is entitled to our assistance and the same rights as any one of us, without injustice or partisanship."
3. "No Unbeliever shall be allowed to place under his protection, against the interest of a Believer, any wealth or person belonging to the Quraysh."

4. "As the Jews fight on the side of the Believers, they shall spend of their wealth on equal par with the Believers. The Jews of Banu al-Aws are an Ummah alongside the Believers."

5. "The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs. Both enjoy the security of their own populace and clients except the unjust and the criminal among them."

6. "The Jews of the Banu al-Najjar, the Banu al-Harith, the Banu Sa'idah, the Banu Jusham, the Banu al-Aws, the Banu Tha'labah, the Jafnah, and the Banu al-Shutaybah—to all the same rights and privileges apply as to the Jews of the Banu Aws."

7. "The Jews shall bear their public expenses and so will the Muslims...Their relationship shall be one of mutual advice and consultation, and of mutual assistance and benevolence rather than harm and aggression."

8. "The town of Yathrib shall constitute a sanctuary for the parties of this covenant."

9. "Whatever difference or dispute among the parties of this covenant remains unsolved shall be referred to God and to Muhammad, the Prophet of God—may God's peace be upon him."

10. "Neither the Quraysh nor their allies shall be given any protection. The people of this covenant shall come to the assistance of one another against whoever attacks Yathrib."

11. "If they are called upon to cease hostilities and to enter into peace, they shall be bound to do so in the interest of peace."

12. "This covenant shall constitute no protection for the unjust or the criminal."<sup>16</sup>

By this constitution the fundamentals of the new state were established:

<sup>16</sup>Haykal, pp. 180-183.

- a. The people: the Muslims, the Jews and those who join them.
- b. The land: the town of Medina.
- c. The common purpose: peace, justice and equality.
- d. The Sovereign: God.
- e. The Administrator: The Apostle Muhammad.

It is of great importance to notice that the covenant was explicit in condemning aggression and injustice and in invoking the assistance of all concerned parties to repudiate such wrongs regardless of whether the wrongs were committed by a Medinite or by a non-partisan. In chapter four we shall see that the Jews violated many articles of this covenant and thus incurred upon themselves the enmity of the Muslims.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER THREE

### *DUSTUR AL-MADINAH (CONSTITUTION OF MEDINA)<sup>17</sup>*

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

1. This is a document from Muhammad, the Prophet, peace be upon him, governing the relations between the Believers and Muslims of the Quraysh and Yathrib (Madinah), and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them.
2. They are one *Ummah* to the exclusion of all men.
3. The Qurayshite emigrants, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.
4. The (tribe of) Banu 'Awf, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.
5. The Banu al-Harith b. al-Khazraj, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.
6. And the Banu Sa'idah, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with kindness and justice common among the Believers.

<sup>17</sup>This document is quoted in its entirety from: Mohamed S. El-Awa, *On The Political System of the Islamic State* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1980), p. 15-20.



7. And the Banu Jusham, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with kindness and justice common among the Believers.

8. The Banu al-Najjar, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.

9. The Banu 'Amr b. 'Awf, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.

10. The Banu al-Nabit, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.

11. The Banu al-Aus, according to their present custom, shall pay the bloodwit they paid previously; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among the Believers.

12. (a) The Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or bloodwit in kindness.

12. (b) A Believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Believer against him (the latter).

13. The Allah-fearing Believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice or sin or enmity or corruption among the Believers. The hand of every man shall be against him even if he be a son of one of them.

14. A Believer shall not slay a Believer for the sake of an Unbeliever nor shall he aid an Unbeliever against a Believer.

15. Allah's protection is one; the least of them (the Believers) may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. The Believers are guardians one to the other to the exclusion of all men.

16. To the Jew who follows us belongs help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided.

17. The peace of the Believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when the Believers are fighting in the way of Allah. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.

18. Forays that fight with us shall alternate in expeditions.<sup>18</sup>

19. The Believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of Allah.

20. (a) The Allah-fearing Believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance.

20. (b) No polytheist (resident of Madinah) shall take the property or person of the Quraysh under his protection nor shall he intervene against a Believer.

21. Whosoever is convicted of killing a Believer without good cause shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the Believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

22. It shall not be lawful for a Believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in Allah and the Last Day to help an evil-doer or to shelter him. The curse of Allah and His anger on the Day of Resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be accepted from him.

23. When a matter is disputed, it must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad.

<sup>18</sup>The author's translation.

24. The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war as long as they are fighting alongside the Believers.
25. The Jews of the Banu 'Awf are one community with the Believers, the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs, they and their freedmen, except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they injure only themselves and their families.
26. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu al-Najjar as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf.
27. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu al-Harith as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf.
28. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu Sa'ida as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf.
29. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu Jusham as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf.
30. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu Tha'laba except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they injure only themselves and their family.
31. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Aws as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf.
32. And the Jafna, a clan of the Tha'laba, are as themselves.
33. The same applies to the Banu al-Shutaybah as applies to the Jews of the Banu 'Awf. Loyalty is a protection against treachery.
34. The freedmen of Tha'laba are as themselves.
35. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.
36. (a) None of them shall go out of Madinah except with the permission of Muhammad.

36. (b) But he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his household, unless it be one who has wronged him, for Allah will accept that.
37. (a) The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery.
37. (b) A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped.
38. The Jews must spend with the Believers so long as war lasts.
39. Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document.
40. A stranger under protection shall be as his host, if harmless and not a criminal.
41. No protection shall be given without the permission of the people concerned.
42. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble among the people of this document should arise, it must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad, Rasul Allah. Allah accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document.
43. The Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection.
44. The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib.
45. (a) If they are called upon to make peace and maintain it, they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Believers, it must be carried out except in the case of war in the cause of religion.



45. (b) Everyone shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs.

46. The Jews of the al-Aws, they and their freedmen, have the same standing with the people of this document in complete loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. He who acquires anything acquires it for himself. Allah approves of this document.

47. This document will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home at Madinah are safe unless he has been unjust and has sinned. Allah is the protector of the good and the Allah-fearing, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROPHET AT WAR

#### I. SECURING MEDINA'S BORDERS

Once Muhammad had put his own house in order and secured Medina's immediate geographical boundaries, he had to turn to his principal enemy, the idolaters of Mecca. He could see that they had no intention of resorting to peace and accepting one of Islam's major principles, the inviolable human right of free thinking. To Meccan idolaters, Islam, more than Muhammad, was the enemy with whom they were irreconcilable. They continued to persecute all Muslims within their reach, confiscating their wealth and property, and following a policy of intimidation and attrition. Their goal was to frighten the pagan Arabs of the peninsula and to warn them against joining Muhammad and his new religion.

As we saw in chapter three, during the thirteen years Muhammad spent at Mecca inviting people to Islam, he never drew a sword or met violence with violence. On the contrary, during this time the Revelation continued reiterating patience, tolerance and forgiveness. Scores of *Qur'anic* verses revealed in Mecca emphasized patient treatment of those non-Muslims who responded with vehemence and aggression to the peaceful Islamic call. God had instructed Muhammad:

"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.... And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from God; nor grieve over them; and distress not thyself because of their plots. For God is with those who restrain themselves and those who do good."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 16: 125-128. See also 10: 109, 20: 130, 46: 35.

But his patience and modest attitude, this peaceful approach to non-Muslims, produced in return only transgression, belligerence and attacks on the person and property of the Muslims. Chapter three describes their plot to kill the Prophet. By conspiring to kill Muhammad and by attacking the Meccan Muslims, the Quraysh of Mecca in effect declared war. Muhammad recognized that continued harassment of the Muslims and intimidation of Muslim sympathizers by the Meccans would put himself, his mission, and his followers in jeopardy, since the Meccans had high prestige among all Arabs. Consequently, Muhammad decided, with God's permission, to counter attack the Meccans.

Revelation at this point, then, gave God's Prophet permission to defend the religion, himself, and the oppressed Muslim converts:

"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;—and verily, God is most able to give them victory. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right,—(for no cause) except that they say: Our Lord is God..."<sup>2</sup>

The general rules of fighting as established by the *Qur'anic* texts on this subject can be summarized as follows:

1. The Meccan idolaters who started the aggression were considered belligerent and should be fought until they surrender.
2. The Jews of Medina who unilaterally revoked their treaties of peace with the Muslims and who treacherously sided with the Meccans against the Muslims should be fought until they surrender.
3. Any tribe that starts aggression against the Muslims or that sides with their Meccan enemies should be fought until it surrenders.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 22: 39-41.

4. Any People of the Book (Jews and Christians) who start aggression against the Muslims or that side with their Meccan enemies should be fought until they surrender.

5. Anybody from among the above-mentioned aggressors who embraces Islam at any time, even after starting a war and before or after his defeat, is immune from any penalty and joins the community of Islam.

Having received God's permission to counter-attack, the Prophet started by attacking merchants' caravans carrying the trade of the Meccans to and from the rich empires to the north of Medina. This action was effective for the following reasons:

- a. The attacks convinced the Meccans that the Muslims could destroy their economy.
- b. Attacking the caravans raised the morale of Muslims who had suffered at the hands of the Meccans.
- c. The attacks put the Meccans on the defensive and showed Muhammad as the strong man who paid no heed to the Meccans' wrath.

Only one of these attacks took place the year the above-mentioned Revelation came known as the first year of Hijra, which means emigration,<sup>3</sup> as the Prophet was busy arranging the internal affairs of his new "city-state" of Medina and preparing for the inevitable confrontation with the Quraysh in Mecca. In the second Hijri year, however, Muslims increased the number of their expeditions to intercept Meccan trading caravans. The Meccans, on their part, were quite aware of the danger, and took precautions not be intercepted. Despite their success in avoiding most of the Muslim ambushes, they felt humiliated and seriously threatened by the Muslims.

<sup>3</sup>The Islamic Calendar begins with the Hijra; therefore, 623 A.C.E. is the year 1 A. H. (After Hijrah).



### A. BATTLE OF BADR

Late in the second year (624 A.C.E.), Muhammad learned of a big caravan going to Syria carrying a considerable amount of money and merchandise. He gathered about three hundred and thirteen of his men and hastened towards the south to meet the caravan. But the latter knew about his marching to them and sent word to Mecca for help. Meanwhile, they changed their route and took an unusual track to the west of Medina to avoid the Muslims. They actually succeeded in avoiding the attack, and sent word of their success to their army who had left Mecca in response to their demand for help. But the army decided not to turn back but to challenge Muhammad. They advanced to a place called Badr, not far south of Medina, guessing that the Muslim expedition would not be strong enough to withstand the might of their one thousand staunch warriors. Muhammad accepted the challenge; God revealed to him that he was to fight the Meccan contingent and promised him divine support and victory. The entire story about this battle is recorded in the *Qur'an*.<sup>4</sup> The force of three hundred and thirteen Muslims overwhelmed the one thousand Meccan soldiers, inflicting upon them a great loss.

The consequences of this battle were so great that it was considered the turning point in the history of Islam. The Quraysh lost its prestigious position among the Arab tribes, while Muhammad became a man of strength to be heeded and feared. Those who had heard about Islam and taken it lightly began to reconsider. The threat to Mecca as the center of paganism and trade was real. The non-Muslims of Medina became more aware of the might of the new community and started thinking how to continue living with Muslims without antagonizing them. The Medinite Jews were very much upset by the outcome of Badr for two reasons:

- a. They realized that Muhammad the Prophet would not embrace Judaism, but would continue his missionary work with increased success.

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an*, Chapter 8—Al-Anfal (The Spoils).

- b. The victory raised the morale of Muslims and consolidated them to an extent which undermined Jewish superiority in Medina.

Accordingly, some Jews decided to attack the newly born Muslim community before it grew to maturity and to keep Muslims in the place which the al-Aws and the al-Khazraj had occupied before Islam.

### B. THE CONQUEST OF QAYNUQA'

The Jews of Banu Qaynuqa' publicly declared their renouncement of their treaty with the Muslims and lashed out at them with accusations and sarcasm. They attacked a Muslim woman, thus challenging the Muslims. The Prophet, sensing treason, called the heads of the Jewish tribes for a meeting in which he warned them against treason and the violation of their pact with him. They only ridiculed him, and met his warnings by a warning. The clash ended with a declaration of war between the Muslims and the Banu Qaynuqa', who took refuge in their strong forts. Muhammad attacked and besieged them for fifteen days after which they accepted defeat and asked the Prophet to allow them to evacuate their positions and emigrate to the north. He accepted their proposition and gave them three days to leave his "city-state," permanently claiming for Muslims all the property they left behind.<sup>5</sup>

### C. BATTLE OF UHUD

In the third year of the Hijra (626 A.C.E.) Muhammad continued his attacks upon the caravans, this time with more success. Some Meccans tried to use the same tactics by attacking the outskirts of Medina, but they were intercepted and severely punished. The Meccans, finding themselves in a

<sup>5</sup>Chronological note: It was also during this second year of Hijra that Muhammad received a Revelation ordering him to pray facing toward the Ka'ba and not toward Jerusalem as Muhammad had previously done. God also prescribed fasting during the sacred month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar year, rather than during Yom Kippur and enjoined the payment of some sort of Alms (*Zakat*) or tax on all Muslims who possessed a certain minimum of wealth.

most critical condition, decided to wage another retaliatory war in the hope of breaking the back of Muslim power. They mobilized three thousand of their best warriors and headed towards Medina. When Muhammad heard the news, he consulted his people about whether to stay at Medina and defend themselves therein or to meet the Quraysh outside the city. His personal view was to remain within the city so well fortified by its natural environment, but the majority voted for meeting the enemy outside Medina. There were one thousand Muslim fighters, all of whom were ready to fight and to die for their religion. The encounter of the two armies took place near a mountain called Uhud to the south of Medina.

In the first round of the battle, the Muslims were victorious, and the Meccans began to retreat. The victors followed them for a short while, then occupied themselves with collecting the spoils. One of the Meccans' regiments found the back of the Muslim army uncovered and outflanked the Muslims and defeated them, though not without substantial loss. As the defeat was not decisive, Abu Sufian, the head of the Quraysh and commander of the Meccan army, challenged Muhammad to meet again at Badr, at the same time the following year. Muhammad agreed and the two armies withdrew from the battlefield. The Muslims headed back to Medina expecting the Meccans to attack the city, taking advantage of their conquest. As soon as he returned to Medina, Muhammad ordered his army to rearm and go back after the Meccans. The idea was brilliant, as the Meccans, on hearing of the Muslims' march, believed that Muhammad had amassed new enforcements and was even better prepared to fight. Consequently, they changed their plan to invade Medina and went back to Mecca, satisfied with their victory.<sup>6</sup>

The Battle of Uhud had many consequences which affected the mode of progress of the Islamic mission:

1. It neutralized, to a great extent, the victory which the Muslims had scored at Badr. Their military superiority, as viewed by the tribes, was now in doubt.

2. The Qurayshites restored a great deal of lost prestige and self-confidence. They cherished anew the hope of destroying Islam and Muhammad.

3. The Jews got the impression that the defeated Muslims were not the best of allies. They had previously discovered that Muhammad could defeat them in their religious dialogues with him. Now, they estimated that an alliance with the Meccan Qurayshites after Uhud would be safer and more advantageous for them.

4. Many of the pagan tribes were encouraged to join the Quraysh and declare their enmity to the new Islamic city-state of Medina.

5. The loss suffered by the Muslims unveiled a faction of hypocrites who had embraced Islam for personal gain, and who had then infiltrated the Muslim community.

6. The defeat was a hard test to true faithful believers who became more united after the battle.

After Uhud, the Quraysh could see that it was not easy for them to destroy the Muslims; consequently they became more reluctant in their aggression. Muhammad took full advantage of this reluctance, fortified his political and military power among the antipathetic tribes, and prepared for a comprehensive campaign to proselytise as many pagan tribes as he could reach.

At the beginning of the fourth year (626 A.C.E.), some pagan tribes (the Banu Asad) declared war on Muhammad, hoping to conquer Medina. The Prophet hastened to attack them in their own lands to the southeast of Medina and inflicted upon them a crushing defeat. Despite this defeat, many clans prompted by the Quraysh played tricks on the Muslims, asking Muhammad to send some of his men to teach them Islam, then killing them. Even his Jewish allies the Banu al-Nadhir, who also had a pact with the al-Khazraj, denounced their alliance with Muhammad. When he went to call on them, in accordance with their pact to claim the

<sup>6</sup>The story of the battle of Uhud is narrated in *Qur'an* 2: 138-175.



bloodwit<sup>2</sup> of two Muslims whom they had killed, they plotted to kill him. He went back to Medina but after a few weeks returned to do battle with them. They withdrew to their fortresses where Muhammad besieged them for six days. Finally, it was agreed that the Banu al-Nadhir would emigrate without being harmed and that they would take with them whatever possessions their animals could carry except weapons.

When the agreed-upon time for the second battle at Badr came, Muhammad went to the appointment with fifteen hundred of his best men. However, Abu Sufian and his army did not show up, owing to a drought that had left Meccans in bad shape. Badr was a place where a big market was held annually and where tribes from a large sector of the peninsula would meet to trade. The presence of the Muslim army and the absence of the Meccan challengers was in itself an implicit victory for the Muslims.

More victories followed. Early in the fifth year (627 A.C.E.) some Bedouin clans in the north continued to harass Muslim traders who travelled to Syria across their lands. When Muhammad learned that these Bedouins had formed an expedition to attack Medina, he came upon them with one thousand Muslim warriors. They could not withstand the surprise attack and fled, leaving their herds and tents behind. Another tribe which had fought against the Muslims at Uhud, the Banu al-Mustaliq, was preparing to launch an assault on Medina. The Prophet followed the same strategy of attack, crushing them in their own land. As this tribe was highly regarded among Arabs, Muhammad married the daughter of their chieftain and freed all the captive women. The gesture was so gracious that the entire tribe embraced Islam.

#### *D. THE BATTLE OF THE CONFEDERATES (THE TRENCHES)*

The Jews of Banu al-Nadhir who had been expelled from their land in the previous year settled in other Jewish communities adjacent to Medina. It was normal that they would seek revenge and incite tumult against the Muslims. In

fact, they went to Mecca and exhorted Abu Sufian to put an end to Muhammad. There they persuaded five of the biggest tribes to join the Quraysh in attacking Medina. The tribes made a pact and mobilized from among themselves ten thousand well-equipped fighters. Such an army was one of the biggest, if not the biggest, of all armies that had ever marched in the Arabian Peninsula. When Muhammad heard of the march, he consulted his people about the forthcoming battle as was his custom. One of his advisors, Salman, who had originally been a Persian captive freed by the Muslims, suggested that the Muslims remain in Medina. Since the city was surrounded by high mountains from the south, east and west, it was extremely difficult to attack from these three directions. As for the northern front, Salman suggested a wide trench be dug all along the plain. The plan was new to Arabs who had never before dug any trenches in their wars, but it was approved.

When the army of the confederates reached Medina, it went directly to the north, but was unable to cross the trenches owing to the arrows of the Muslims who were shooting from behind the walls of the city. Very few confederates crossed the trenches without being immediately killed. The two armies exchanged arrows over the trenches for several days without a clear sign of victory for either party. Abu Sufian thought that if he could induce the Jews of the Banu Qurayza to renounce their pact with Muhammad and join his camp, he could easily defeat the Muslims. The Banu Qurayza were within Medina, and all provisions came through them. Furthermore, they were powerful and well armed. Knowing this, Abu Sufian sent one of the heads of the tribes who had good relations with the Banu Qurayza to persuade them to renounce their covenant and to attack the Muslims. The Jews agreed, and declared their intention to side with the confederates. The news was a terrible blow to the Muslims as they could foresee their defeat.

At this point, Muhammad tried a clever device aimed at disparaging his polytheistic enemies. A new Muslim who had friendly relations with both Jews and Meccans volunteered to inform the Jews that the confederates would be after their wealth when the war was over. He recommended to them that

<sup>2</sup>Bloodwit is the money paid to the family of a person who is killed by an ally.

they insist on having seventy confederate men stay with them as a token of good will. Then he told Abu Sufian that the Jews did not renounce the pact with the Muslims but intended to ask for hostages to be delivered to Muhammad. When the Jews did, in fact, ask the polytheists for the hostages, Abu Sufian believed the messenger and rejected their demand.

Luckily for the Muslims, a violent storm started the next night which played havoc with the confederates' camp, leaving them miserable and without tents or ample food. Consequently, Abu Sufian lost his nerve and decided to depart. The confederates followed, disappointed by their failure. A few hours after their departure, a relieved Muhammad ordered his army to march to the quarters of the Banu Qurayza. The Jews took refuge behind their forts to defend themselves against the siege which continued for twenty-five days. Lacking provisions, and being unable to fight outside the forts, they asked Muhammad to allow them to leave the land on the same terms of the Banu Qaynuqa', that is, to allow them to migrate and to carry with them their portable wealth. Muhammad refused and insisted on arbitration. They chose as arbitrator, Sa'd Ibn Mo'az, an ally of the Qurayza whose judgment both parties agreed to accept. Sa'd ordered men to be executed and women to be held captive, declaring such was the reward of treason. The verdict was acted upon.

The withdrawal of the confederates from Medina left the Prophet and the Medinites stronger than ever before. However, the expelled Jews (the Banu Qaynuqa' and the Banu al-Nadhir) were determined not to leave Muhammad in peace. They resumed their efforts to retaliate against the Prophet, inciting various defeated tribes to attack the Muslims wherever they found them. Muhammad responded by sending strong expeditions to the various inimical tribes in an attempt to quell their prowess.

At the beginning of the sixth year (628 A.C.E.), thirteen successful expeditions were sent. The Medinites started feeling more relaxed as a result of this success and more prosperous as a result of the wealth they gained from the Jews and the spoils taken from the enemies defeated by the expeditions. Nevertheless, they could not feel completely

secure while the Quraysh was still strong and full of spite and enmity.

#### E. TRUCE OF HUDAYBIYAH

In the previous year, the Revelation had prescribed pilgrimage for all Muslims. So in 6 A.H. the Prophet decided to perform 'Umra—a ritualistic visit to the Ka'ba—where everybody without exception was allowed and where war was strictly forbidden. One thousand and five hundred Muslims joined him in this journey. Upon their arrival, the Quraysh refused him admission to Mecca, but signed a treaty with Muhammad whereby they agreed to allow him to perform the ritual the following year and whereby some terms regarding the treatment of Muslims and polytheists were spelled out. The treaty is known as the truce of Hudaibiyah, the place where Muhammad camped outside Mecca. It constituted a limited truce between the Muslims and the Quraysh, but it was not a final settlement by any means.

#### F. THE BATTLE OF KHAYBAR

Many of the Jews of the Banu al-Nadhir and the Banu Qaynuqa' who had been expelled from Medina joined the Jews who lived as a colony at Khaybar, a place situated about one hundred miles north of Medina. From there, they conducted their anti-Islamic activities, inciting tribes and concocting plots to assassinate the Prophet and to pillage Muslim caravans. The Jews of Khaybar participated in all these activities:

"The Jews of Khaybar, especially the leaders of the clan of the an-Nadhir exiled from Medina, were still incensed at Muhammad. They made lavish, though no doubt judicious, use of their wealth to induce the neighboring tribes to take up arms against the Muslims. This was a straightforward reason for attacking Khaybar."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad—Prophet and Statesman*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 189.



It was judicious for the Jews of Khaybar to use their wealth the way they liked, but was it judicious to renounce the treaty with Muhammad by which they were bound to be his ally? Was it judicious to use the money for attacking the Muslims and to incite the neighboring tribes to fight them? Muhammad's answer to such questions was in the negative. Accordingly, he decided to defend his state against the offenders.

The Jews built a series of well-contained and well-equipped fortresses in Khaybar which the Muslims attacked and conquered, one after another. Finally, the Jews surrendered, leaving to the Muslims a great wealth of booty. The Prophet wanted to expel them from their land, but they requested him to keep them there as they were better farmers than the Bedouin Arabs. He agreed, with the provision that they keep half the crops and give the state the other half and that he would have the unilateral right to terminate this arrangement.

Having subdued Khaybar, the Prophet turned his attention towards the other Jewish settlements scattered around the area where the inhabitants once collaborated with their co-religious main tribes. Some of them surrendered without a fight, accepting the same terms for occupying the land as Khaybar had, while others showed resistance and suffered defeat with its consequences.<sup>9</sup>

After the battle of Kaybar, the Muslims felt much more secure and self-confident. Most of the tribes that were actively hostile to them had been subdued. The number of Muslims increased substantially, and the state was well established, having important new economic resources.

### G. THE BATTLE OF MU'TA

In the north, adjacent to the southern Byzantine boundaries, there was a small Arab principedom to which the Prophet had in the previous year sent an ambassador with a

<sup>9</sup>It is of interest to mention here that after inflicting such a sweeping defeat on the Jews in Khaybar and the Banu-Nadhir, Muhammad married Safiya—the daughter of Huyay—the head of the Banu al-Nadhir, granted her freedom and treated her the same way he treated his other wives.

letter inviting the prince to Islam.<sup>10</sup> The city was called Busra, a part of the Ghassassins. Unfortunately, the prince was so arrogant that he considered the invitation to Islam an insult and responded by killing the ambassador. Muhammad never forgot the injury.

About the end of the eighth year (630 A.C.E.) the Prophet sent a strong army of three thousand men to retaliate against the prince of Busra, who was an ally of the Romans. When the army reached Mu'ta, to the south of Busra, they found a stupendous Roman army composed of about one hundred and fifty thousand warriors. Nevertheless, the Muslims put up a courageous fight which cost the lives of the first three commanders of their army in the first week. The fourth general maneuvered a withdrawal which gave the Romans

<sup>10</sup>In the year 6 A.H., upon his return to Medina after securing the truce of Hudaibiyah, Muhammad sent messages both to Arab and non-Arab monarchs inviting them to Islam. The letters were short, simple, and to the point. All of them were stamped "Muhammad the Apostle of God". The letters went to Heraclius the Emperor of Byzantium, Chosroes II the Emperor of Persia, Negus the King of Abyssinia, Muqawqis the Ruler of Egypt and to some Arab princes who ruled over small cities bordering the two great empires. The following letter to Heraclius is taken from Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's book *Muhammad Rasalullah*, pp. 274-5:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This letter is from Muhammad, the servant and messenger of God, to Heraclius, the great king of Rome. Blessed are those who follow the (divine) guidance.

After this, verily I call you to Islam. Embrace Islam so that you may find peace, and God will give you a double reward. If you reject, then on you shall rest the sin of your subjects and followers.

"O People of the Book come to that which is common between us; that we worship none but Allah, nor associate aught with Him, nor take from among ourselves Lords besides God. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims". *Qur'an* 3: 65

Most of the Prophet's ambassadors who carried the letters were well received and were permitted to explain the message of Islam. Some of the rulers accepted the invitation and embraced Islam, while others were unsympathetic. Extending the invitation to Islam beyond the boundaries of Arabia made the point that Muhammad had not been sent as a prophet to the Arabs alone, but that Islam was a universal religion. There was no claim that Muslims were the "chosen" people of any ethnic race.

the impression that new reinforcements had arrived and that the Muslims were trying to drag them into the desert. At the end of the second week, the Romans started to retreat without a fight, giving the Muslims an opportunity to save their lives without being defeated.

## II. MUHAMMAD'S SUPREMACY ESTABLISHED

Two months before the end of the year 8 A. H. an incident took place which justified a march on Mecca. A tribe allied to Quraysh attacked another tribe allied to Muslims. When Muhammad discussed the matter with the Quraysh in accordance with their limited pact of Hudaibiyah, they rejected the approach and renounced the agreement. The Prophet welcomed the challenge as it presented the opportunity to conquer the Quraysh and restore the Ka'ba to monotheism.

### A. THE CONQUEST OF MECCA

Muhammad mobilized ten thousand warriors and discreetly marched them to the outskirts of Mecca. The surprise march so stunned Abu Sufian, the head of the Quraysh, that he could do nothing but go personally to the Prophet and talk to him. When he saw the Muslim camp, he was convinced that his warriors could not withstand an attack even for one day, so he declared his Islam and surrendered. The Prophet gave orders that no person was to be killed unless he fought the Muslims. Moreover, he honored Abu Sufian by announcing that whoever entered his house would be immune from attack. In fact, the conquest of Mecca had taken place in the most peaceful manner conceivable. Some Qurayshites resisted the invasion, but they were easily defeated, with as few as twenty-six lives lost. Muhammad showed his prophetic character in the most magnanimous fashion. He pardoned all those who had fought him in the past, all those who had ever attacked his person and those who had persecuted his followers—except for nine persons who were bent on fighting Islam to the end. He never boasted about his conquest which he attributed to Allah; he respected the vanquished and confirmed the leaders of the Quraysh in

their positions. He cleared the Ka'ba of all its three hundred idols and claimed it as the Sacred House of the Muslims. The address he made to the Quraysh at the door of the Ka'ba the moment he reached there was a sign of humility and the introduction of a new ideology for mankind. The Prophet said:

"There is no God but Allah alone; He has no associate. He has made good His promise and helped His servant. He has alone overthrown all the confederates. Lo! All the privileges and claims (of pre-Islamic) retaliation and bloodwit are beneath my feet except the custody of the Ka'ba and providing water for the pilgrims.

O ye people of Quraysh, God has abolished the haughtiness of paganism and the pride of lineage. Man springs from Adam and Adam sprang from dust."<sup>11</sup>

Then the Prophet recited the *Qur'anic* verse:

"O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."<sup>12</sup>

The conquest of Mecca was the beginning of an end of warring. Arabs from all over the peninsula came to the Prophet, adopted Islam and paid him allegiance. They found a new bond to unite them, a new supreme law to rule over them and a new ideology to motivate them.

### B. THE BATTLE OF HUNAYN

Two important tribes, the Hawazin and the Thaqif, living at al-Ta'if, about fifty miles to the southeast of Mecca, refused

<sup>11</sup>Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Muhammad Rasulallah* (Luknow, India: Islamic Research & Publication, 1979), p. 325.

<sup>12</sup>*Qur'an*, 41: 13.



to acknowledge the new Islamic state, afraid that Muhammad would attack them as he had attacked the Quraysh. Thus, they decided to attack Muhammad during his stay in Mecca.

The Prophet mobilized twelve thousand men, ten thousand from Medina and two thousand from the new Muslim Meccans. He went to meet the oncoming enemy at a valley called Hunayn, not far from Mecca. The over-confident Muslims were intercepted by an ambush of formidable archers who dispersed the flanks of the Muslim army. The Muslims would have fled in defeat had it not been for the steadfastness of Muhammad and his main Medinite troops in the center. The battle ended by the defeat of the Hawazin and the capture of a great booty.

### C. THE BATTLE OF AL-TA'IF

Many soldiers of the defeated army of the famous tribe of Thaqif escaped capture and returned to their mountainous, well-fortified city of al-Ta'if. Muhammad followed them immediately after the battle of Hunayn, planning to attack them before they got prepared for a second fight. From their forts, they were able to keep the Muslims at a distance from the walls of the city. The siege continued about a month, but the Thaqif had enough provisions to sustain their resistance for a much longer period. It was in this battle that the Muslims used catapults for the first time to provide an opening and to shield its infantry in a daring attack against the enemy. Although the Thaqif successfully resisted the attack and stopped the advance, this tribe became more apprehensive and skeptical about their destiny.

Having lost the battle, the Prophet threatened to cut down their vineyards which were the main source of wealth for the Thaqif. They were frightened and pleaded to him in the name of God to spare their cultivation. Surprisingly, the Prophet's answer was: "Certainly, I leave them for God's sake and our kinship." Another surprise was the Prophet's announcement that if any slave of the Thaqif joined his camp, he would be accepted as a free man. Those slaves who were able to run away did not hesitate to join the Muslims and adopt Islam. That incident hurt the Thaqif both materially and morally.

According to the Arabs' tradition, the enemy's asking for a favor and the opponent's granting the favor is in itself a token of peaceful surrender. Accordingly, the Prophet left the Thaqif and returned to Mecca where he remained only long enough to set up the new administration. This accomplished, he returned to Medina.

### D. EXPEDITION OF TABOUK

Soon after his return to Medina, Muhammad learned that the Romans, at a place called Tabouk on the southern boundaries of Byzantium, had mobilized an army to invade his new state. He reacted by mobilizing thirty thousand soldiers, having in mind the previous experience of Mu'ta. When the Prophet arrived in the Tabouk he did not find the Romans. This was the end of Muhammad's wars, as nobody in the peninsula further challenged him as a prophet or as a statesman. He stayed a few days and then returned without fighting.

On his way back from this expedition, which took place early in the ninth year (631 A.C.E.), he passed through the lands of some Christians with whom he signed treaties of peace and co-existence. As soon as the Prophet returned to Medina he received a delegation from the Thaqif who came to pay him allegiance and to embrace Islam. Many tribes, especially those of Yemen in the south, declared their Islam and became members of the fraternal Islamic community.

In the tenth year after his emigration from Mecca to Medina (10 A.H. or 632 A.C.E.), Muhammad performed his last pilgrimage to Mecca and died soon after in Medina.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE STATE OF MEDINA

#### *I. THE PROPHET AS HEAD OF STATE*

Before Muhammad engaged in the wars to preserve Islam against its enemies, he turned his attention toward building up the Islamic state of Medina, the fundamentals of which were established by the constitution presented in the appendix to chapter three. As head of state, Muhammad had executive and judicial authority. Legislation dictated by the Revelation mainly pertained to matters concerning the basic rights and obligations of citizens. Other subordinate matters were subject to decrees derived from revealed constitutional principles, or from prevailing conventions that did not run contrary to the new constitution. The whole state was built on Islamic teachings revealed to and applied by the Prophet. Because the system was a sharp contrast to the primitive tribal political units Arabs were accustomed to (in which laws were derived from paganistic beliefs and social traditions), Muhammad introduced changes in Medina gradually. Whenever the need arose, a Revelation came with the new law, which the Prophet enforced. All the revealed injunctions served to confirm and cultivate the main Islamic principle of absolute *oneness* with all of its implications.

Muhammad was not an ordinary preacher nor was he an ordinary head of state. He came with a message to teach and with new laws based on Islamic morals, and with principles that would constitute the best possible state and provide the utmost of peace and happiness to its citizens. The philosophy behind the concept is simple and coherent. The society is made of individuals. The more righteous these individuals are, the more sane and sound the society becomes. But righteousness and morality are subjective values which differ, at least in degree, from one person to another. Consequently, unless there is a standard of values, and unless



they are reflected in people's transactional behavior, the values would have very little effect on public life. Accordingly, Islam enjoined a comprehensive set of laws to apply to various transactional behaviors.

*Qur'anic* injunctions together with the *Sunnah* are called the *Shari'a* (meaning basic laws). The *Qur'an*, the first and main source of the Islamic *Shari'a* provided the basic principle of the society. The *Sunnah* (whatever the Apostle said or did or acknowledged as a part of Islam) was the second source. As Muslims see it, the *Shari'a* brought a comprehensive set of laws of existence that guarantee man's spiritual satisfaction and material welfare. God commanded Muslims to enforce these laws, expressing His command in strict language:

"So judge between (and rule over) them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that has come to you. To each among you have we prescribed a law and a clear way to a system of life."<sup>1</sup>

"If any do fail to judge by what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) unbelievers."<sup>2</sup>

And again the *Qur'an* says: "He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed" (2: 213). Many *Hadiths* or traditions enjoin Muslims to apply the injunctions of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* and to obey the Imam (the ruler) as long as he does not violate the rules of the *Shari'a*.<sup>3</sup>

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STATE

The state of Medina as constituted by Muhammad was characterized by the fact that God was the Sovereign, that every member of the community had the responsibility to enforce the law and that the divine law was supreme.

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an* 5: 51.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 5: 45.

<sup>3</sup>*Mishkat-ul Masabih*, trans. James Robson (Moh. Ashraf, Lahore, 1963), Vol. II, pp. 780, 782.

## A. SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Sovereignty belonged to God, the Lord of everything. Since man was made His vicegerent, man could assume sovereignty by proxy. There was, however, a strict limitation on power, restricting the function of the ruling body to executing the laws of the *Shari'a* only. The power residing in the sovereign, i.e. God, was actually exercised by the *Ummah* (the people). Accordingly, the *Imam* was not the sovereign. Even Muhammad, who was the harbinger of the revealed message was not considered the sovereign except when he was implementing an inspired Revelation. The practical application of this concept is that the *Ummah*—the people—cannot enact a law that violates or contradicts or rescinds any Islamic law. If they do, as the case is at present in almost all Muslim countries, they are not considered citizens of an Islamic state.

## B. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The government was comprised of executive, judicial and legislative functions, with Muhammad as chief executive and head of state. In this capacity, he appointed all high officials, the governors, the judges, and the army commanders. He also signed treaties and declared war, as we have discussed. He was responsible for public finance, public security and the welfare of the people. In undertaking all of these responsibilities, he was greatly supported by the system itself. Because Islam ordained that every Muslim must proclaim the good and eschew the unjust and the evil, such ordainment made every citizen a member of the executive body having the moral and legal responsibility of enforcing the law.<sup>4</sup> Islam is unique among all religions and constitutions in its holding the individual responsible for proclaiming good and forbidding evil as much as he can. Good and evil in this context are defined by the Islamic laws and values prescribed in the *Shari'a*. Every person must give an accounting for his responsibilities. The Muslim who fails to undertake his duty becomes liable to punishment. The Apostle says: "He who sees an abomination (evil), let him change it by his hand

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an* 3: 104, 113, 114; 9: 71, 112; 16: 90; 6: 152.

(physically). If he cannot, let him change it by his tongue (speech). If he (still) cannot, let him change it by his heart."<sup>5</sup>

This codified moral law is extremely effective in the formation of a sound government, because participation in applying the laws becomes the responsibility of all citizens, not the responsibility or a monopoly or the obligation of the ruler alone. In both a democracy and an autocracy, the individual is not legally responsible for any violation of laws as long as he personally does not participate in the violation, nor is he responsible for doing what is right if he opts not to. The similarity between Islam and other doctrines is that in all doctrines and substantive laws, the individual is supposed to avoid what the laws have forbidden, i.e. to act negatively towards that which is prohibited. The difference is that Islam makes two additional requirements—a positive contribution to the good and a positive action to check the evil. These additional requirements promote human fraternity and communal solidarity.

### C. SUPREMACY OF THE DIVINE LAW

The Arabs of the seventh century were highly individualistic, but in Medina, Islamic laws regulated a community in which it was clear that the individualistic interests were best served when the collective interest was served. Laws which organized human life in the private and the public spheres were clear. There were laws for marriage, divorce, inheritance, and rules of behavior for parents and children, men and women. In addition, well-defined rules of justice, human rights and laws administered the relationship between the individual and his government and between the government of Medina and other governments. As all these basic laws were attributed to Allah Who revealed them to His Apostle, they were accepted in their entirety by all and were applicable to all. There was a sense of piety in abiding by the law as well as a deep feeling of equality among all citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim. Freedom, which is most precious and vital to a Bedouin, was best served in the Medina state under Muhammad. There were no restrictions on the activities of individuals except those interdicted by the

<sup>5</sup>Muslim, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih*, Vol. I (Al-Maktab al-Tujari, Beirut) p. 50.

*Shari'a*. In fact, freedom never flourished elsewhere in the peninsula as it did in that state. The Muslim felt his responsibility towards his fellowmen and knew his limits by virtue of knowing his religion.

Real equality was practiced without bias or hindrance. There were no kings or princes, no class systems, no religious institutions, and no discrimination between black and white, male and female, rich and poor. Among Muhammad's ministers were the Ethiopian ex-slave Bilal and the Persian ex-slave Salman. Among his advisors were Abu Bakr, his close confidant, and Sawda, his wise wife. Among his private personal friends were the pauper Abu Dharr and the millionaire Abu 'Ubayda. Muhammad admonished his citizens that all people are the same as the teeth of a comb; they came from Adam and Adam was created from dust; there is no privilege for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a white over a black, except that of heeding God and piety.

Muhammad introduced the first welfare system in human history. It revolutionized the social life of the community and created a prelude to a civilization that lasted longer than any other civilization. In the view of this writer, this miraculous system was most concerned with preserving the sense of humanity in the individual. Islam gave the citizen the right to lead a decent life—he must have ample food, reasonable abode, basic education, suitable work, overall security and a means of transportation. Furthermore, Islam enjoined that the state should be responsible for the payment of debts of those who fail to meet their obligations. All indigents, young orphans, incapacitated or unemployed persons were provided for by the state. *Zakat*,<sup>6</sup> being a tax and a ritual at the same time, made such a welfare state not only possible, but viable. All members of the community were treated with compassion and mercy; none were suppressed or tyrannized. The resulting sense of security created, for the first time in the history of Arabia, a unified and powerful state, accomplished in only ten years time.

Discipline was a major factor in building the state of Medina. In fact, the Islamic doctrine confirms the biological dictum "that before there was life, there had to be a

<sup>6</sup>*Zakat* is discussed in detail in chapter seven.



system...there has to be order...it is life...Death is disorder."<sup>7</sup> Order is the first lesson one learns from Islam. Daily prayers have to be performed in determined hours. *Zakat* has to be paid at fixed dates every year. Fasting and pilgrimage are highly organized rituals. Every activity of the individual is subject to a prescribed frame compatible with the general Islamic philosophy and designed to benefit the individual as an active member of his society.<sup>8</sup>

It is not enough for the head of state to have a sophisticated, superbly disciplined mind as Muhammad had. For the state to be successful, its citizens also have to be disciplined. Islamic teachings provided an environment in which the individual willingly followed the pattern of disciplined life and responded to its requirements.

By establishing an Islamic state, Muhammad introduced to the world an unprecedented model of human society. Here, religion was translated into laws that governed the Muslims' daily activities and disciplined their societal behavior. Morals which are advocated by all religions were codified and defined. Fraternity, equality, justice and love were not mere abstract words, but imperatives translated into positive actions that all Muslims had to practice, if not out of piety and good sense, then by force of law and out of fear of punishment.

<sup>7</sup>L. L. Larison Cadmore, *The Center of Life* (The New York Times Books, 1977), p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>See chapter eight for details.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE QUR'AN—THE HOLY BOOK

#### I. THE MIRACLE

The *Qur'an* is the Book revealed by God to His Apostle Muhammad which gives Muslims the essentials of their belief and the basic rules regulating their secular life. The fact that it is the word of God makes it final and binding. It is the miracle with which Muhammad challenged unbelievers and which proved his prophethood.

As indicated in earlier chapters, anybody whose mother tongue is Arabic can easily distinguish between the *Qur'anic* style and any other human style, including the style of Muhammad's sayings. The Arabs of the seventh century were renowned for their eloquence and mastery of language. They have left us a wealth of exquisite poetry and prose. When those Arabs heard the *Qur'an*, they were fascinated by its unique melody and unmatched style. The words used in the *Qur'an* were well understood by the Arabs, yet the style was different. In every sentence in that Book there are so many shades of meaning that those who read it find in their hearts some special feeling beside the generally understood connotation of the words. Many early converts believed in Muhammad's prophethood simply by listening to him recite the revealed verses. When the pagan Meccans rejected Muhammad and his message, God challenged them to compose even ten verses similar to those revealed.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps they tried to do so, but none ever claimed that they could equal the language of the *Qur'an*. Other prophets did perform physical miracles—Abraham endured fire burning, Moses split the sea, Jesus resurrected the dead, etc. Although these miracles became history, leaving no tangible evidence, Muslims believe in them because they are mentioned in the *Qur'an*. Other scriptures were revealed by God to other

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 11: 13.

prophets, but they were revealed in languages that became dead. The *Qur'an*, however, was transmitted to Muhammad in a language which was intended to last forever, and God promised to preserve the *Qur'an* from corruption and adulteration. "We have, without doubt, sent down the Dhikr (*Qur'an*), and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)."<sup>2</sup>

The miracle of the *Qur'anic* language comprises three main aspects:

1. It is immune from corruption because it is impossible to match. Any change in words, any addition or deletion can easily be detected.
2. Its meanings are infinite; they are as deep as a bottomless sea. A reader can dive into it to any depth that he is capable of reaching. This aspect gives the *Qur'an* its eternal appropriateness. Throughout the ages, Muslims have found in it answers to their problems and guidance for their public and private lives.
3. It has a melody that does not subside by repetition. On the contrary, the more one reads it, the more one enjoys it. The pleasure of reading the miraculous language fills up the heart and revives faith in Allah. It builds a bridge of communication between the Muslim and his Creator.

The first verses of the *Qur'an* were revealed in the year 610 A.C.E. when Muhammad was forty years of age. The revelation came through the "Holy Spirit,"<sup>3</sup> or the "Faithful Spirit,"<sup>4</sup> or the "Spirit of Our Command."<sup>5</sup> "Spirit" here refers to Gabriel, the angel who transmitted to Muhammad the words of God.<sup>6</sup> Muhammad's main role as a prophet was to transmit, in turn, these same words to the people of the world.

The Revelation came to Muhammad throughout the twenty-three years of his prophethood, sometimes a few verses at a time, and sometimes a short or a long chapter of scores of verses. Verses were revealed mostly to respond to a particular quest. Sometimes they were revealed to answer queries or accusations from the pagans of Mecca, or the Jews

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 15: 9.

<sup>3</sup>*Qur'an*, 16: 102.

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an*, 26: 193.

<sup>5</sup>*Qur'an*, 42: 52.

<sup>6</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 97.

of Medina, or the Christians of the north and south of Arabia. Quite frequently the verses were revealed to establish new social, political and economic rules. It is not rare to come across *Qur'anic* verses imposing gradual prohibitions on some pre-Islamic practices and traditions.

Verses revealed in Mecca were mostly concerned with the idea of *oneness*. The message is a mixture of logical discussions and admonitions to the Arabs who did not submit to reasoning. Stories about previous prophets and their experiences with their peoples are told and retold in different words, each time with a different emphasis. The reader never feels that repetition is redundant or monotonous. *Qur'anic* verses are mostly short, rhythmic and sharp. They are so limpid and clear in their construction, so simple and logical in their connotation, that their challenge to the masters of language among pagan Arabs was overwhelming.

On the other hand, verses that were revealed in Medina dealt mainly with issues concerning religious rituals and matters related to the principles of mundane life in Islam. The verses were longer; the language was more lucid and subtle, and the rhythm was more diversified. These verses have the miraculous peculiarity of referring to particular incidents that actually took place for which divine guidance was necessary, and at the same time establishing a general principle to be applied over the ages in similar cases. This unique congeniality of the *Qur'anic* language makes it ubiquitous and ever-alive in the Muslims' daily life. One may read it at any time, in any society, and one would feel that it is addressing that specific society at that particular time, no matter what degree of civilization the society has attained. The style of the *Qur'an* played a striking role in changing the pre-Islamic society with all its nefarious customs and traditions into a new developed, civilized and coherent *Ummah* or community. This radical transformation alone is evidence of the miraculous nature of the *Qur'an*.

Another important characteristic of the *Qur'anic* style is the frequency of symbolism, allegories and parables, together with imaginary dialogues. Such presentations make it easy to understand the many metaphysical phenomena discussed in the *Qur'an* such as divine omnipotence, angels, afterlife, creation of man, etc. Almost all translators of the *Qur'an* have



tried to translate verbatim, which sometimes results in rendering the meaning rather ambiguous and occasionally even inaccurate. For instance, the dialogue between God and the angels<sup>7</sup> and the subsequent figuration of the creation of Adam can only be rightly interpreted when they are understood as symbolic. The same applies to the passages in which God addresses the earth and the heavens and to their answers to Him.<sup>8</sup> Any person who is not aware of such subtleties in the *Qur'anic* style may be misled to the grievous conclusion that there are contradictory verses in the Holy Book.

## II. CONTENTS OF THE QUR'AN

The *Qur'an* is not a book of history or of science despite the fact that it relates many historical stories and refers to many scientific facts. The main objective of this Holy Book is to guide human beings toward what is beneficial for them, to teach them the facts of existence, and to preach wisdom, mercy and compassion. Of the *Qur'an*, God says:

"This is the Book: in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who heed God."<sup>9</sup>

"The *Qur'an* guides one to what is more straightforward and reassures believers who act honorably that they shall have great rewards."<sup>10</sup>

"O mankind, there has come to you a direction from your Lord and healing for (the disease) in your hearts, and for those who believe, a guidance and a mercy."<sup>11</sup>

"We sent down the *Qur'an* in Truth, and in Truth has it descended: and We sent thee but to give glad tidings and to warn sinners."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 31-37.

<sup>8</sup>*Qur'an*, 41: 11.

<sup>9</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 2.

<sup>10</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 9-10.

<sup>11</sup>*Qur'an*, 10: 57.

<sup>12</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 105.

There are hundreds of such verses in the *Qur'an* whose obvious main objective is to guide man to the strict principle of *oneness*. Muslims believe that knowledge imparted by God to man through the *Qur'an* constitutes the whole Truth as God is the absolute Truth and the only Reality.<sup>13</sup> When an individual accepts this concept he becomes a believer in Islam, aware of God's mercy and compassion. From that moment on he must live by God's standards of values and follow His commands. The *Qur'an* clearly indicates that true believers shall have felicity, peace, and great rewards both in this life and after death. Those who duly perform their prayers, abstain from vain talk, avoid adultery and fornication and observe their trusts and covenants—those are the genuine believers who, will "be successful in this life" and "will inherit Paradise."<sup>14</sup>

The Muslim learns to balance his spiritual and material life. A Muslim is taught by the *Qur'an* to believe that he is begotten by God's Word, that his soul is from the Divine Lord and that his creation has been forever ordained by God. The *Qur'an* teaches that man is born neutral, without "original sin," and that by nature he is good, not sinful. The *Qur'an* teaches him how to foster this innate goodness and how to discipline his instincts so as to avoid major errors or sins. God bestowed on man the privilege of "trust" or the freedom of will and choice. As man cannot formulate for himself the standards of values by which he should live in society, God prescribed these standards and commands believers to strictly observe them. Those who choose to disregard the standards harm both themselves and their fellowmen.

### A. SPIRITUAL ISSUES

God explains in the *Qur'an* most eschatological issues that are beyond the reach of human minds. Some of the following will be presented in chapter seven as articles of faith.

1. *Creation*. God, the omnipotent Creator, willed the universe to exist and created man, giving him the trust and making him His vicegerant. The soul, or the spirit, of man is a sort of energy that cannot be conceived,<sup>15</sup> but can only

<sup>13</sup>*Qur'an*, 6: 62, 20: 114.

<sup>14</sup>*Qur'an*, 23: 1-11.

<sup>15</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 85.

be felt through its effects. For this reason humans are responsible for their actions only, though God encourages them to develop their spiritual powers by following His instruction. Adam was created from substance, water and earthen material. Whether he passed through stages and evolved over time, or whether he was fully created at the beginning as a human being is not specifically mentioned in the *Qur'an*. The important consideration is that man exists and that he has a mission to accomplish during his limited life on earth. This mission is specified in the *Qur'an*—it is to worship God by following His directions and applying His laws.

2. *Angels*. Muslims believe in the existence of angels as an article of faith. God describes angels as His servants who, having no free will, obey Him without question. These creatures do not interfere with man's choices or actions. The only relationship between them and humans established in the *Qur'an* is that they register what humans do in their life.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to angels, Satan is the instigator of evil and foul behavior.<sup>17</sup> All these creatures are different from humans in their nature, either by their constitution or their function.

3. *Death*. Death is the separation of the soul from the physical body.<sup>18</sup> It occurs as a consequence of some disorder in the structure of the living organism. God separates the soul from the body which disintegrates or dies. Muslims believe that what we call death is not the end of a human's soul. The *Qur'an* informs us that the soul continues to live after departing from the physical body and becomes more aware of the facts of existence.<sup>19</sup> After death, the soul undergoes two experiences. The first is its complete awareness and sensitiveness. It suffers from the evil which the person might have done during his life-time, and it rejoices in the good he accomplished. The second is its stand on the Day of Judgment, where all humans will be

resurrected and judged before God.

4. *Day of Judgment*. The Day of Judgment is the day on which every human being will be tried by his Creator. Those who have disobeyed God, those who have denied His deity and those who associated other beings (e.g. idols) with Him will be severely punished. On the other hand, those who believed in Him, accepted His Apostles, and followed His enjoinders and laws will be blessed and rewarded. In almost every chapter of the Holy Book this fact is mentioned and underscored. Life, in the Islamic concept, is a continuous phenomenon deriving from the eternal Word of God.

Paradise and hell are two expressions referring to the status of the soul after the Judgment. There is no paradise or happiness better than earning the pleasure and satisfaction of the Lord, and no hell worse than earning His wrath and dissatisfaction. Numerous verses in the *Qur'an* describe Paradise as a place full of gardens and beautiful things. Hell is depicted as simmering fire and awful torture. These phrases can be viewed as only figurative because in other verses God promises the believers eternal life under His mercy and compassion.<sup>20</sup> That promise, however, does not exclude the possibility of physical resurrection and physical reward. On the premises that God is omnipotent, and that He created all beings, it is not illogical to believe that He is capable of resurrecting humans and of rewarding them in physical terms.

5. *Salvation*. The *Qur'an* does not acknowledge "salvation" except in one form—the good deed of the individual. Those who err incur punishment upon themselves. Muslims believe that no person has the power to intercede on behalf of another.<sup>21</sup> Muhammad, just before his death, told his daughter Fatimah that he could never help her before God. *Qur'anic* verses abound with the admonition that every person is alone responsible for what he does. Repentance is the Islamic way to salvation.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup>*Qur'an*, 41: 25, 50: 23.

<sup>17</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 268.

<sup>18</sup>*Qur'an*, 39: 42.

<sup>19</sup>*Qur'an*, 50:22.

<sup>20</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 107, 32: 17-18.

<sup>21</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 15, 35: 18.

<sup>22</sup>*Qur'an*, 5: 39, 6: 54, 19: 60, 25: 71.



Because man is fallible he is expected to err and to sin. Nevertheless, God is merciful and accepts repentance. He forgives those who admit their mistakes, vow not to repeat them and do what is good as evidence of their true penance. There is, in Islam, only one unforgivable sin—attributing deity to beings other than God. "God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth. To set up partners with God is to devise a sin most hideous indeed."<sup>23</sup>

## B. MUNDANE ISSUES

Most of the verses revealed to Muhammad in Medina deal with the three dimensions of an individual: as a servant of God, as an individual person, and as a member of the Muslim Ummah or society.

1. *The Servant of God.* The *Qur'an* defines the relationship between man and God, clearly indicating that man belongs entirely to God and accordingly must obey only Him. In this relationship man is superior to all other creatures having been endowed by God with free agency and vicegerency. "We have honoured the Sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure, and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of Our Creation."<sup>24</sup> This superiority makes it incumbent upon mankind to acknowledge God's favor and execute His injunctions. This is the essence of vicegerency and the translation of worship in Islam. "Work (righteousness): Soon will God observe your work, and His Apostle, and the Believers; soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open; then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."<sup>25</sup>

Another advantage man enjoys in this relationship is his ability to communicate with God:

"When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every

suppliant when he calleth on Me. Let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me, that they may walk in the right way."<sup>26</sup>

This closeness of God to mankind, His openness to the call of supplicants and His readiness to guide them towards righteousness is the key to man's happiness in this life and in the hereafter. Muslims believe God is always available to whoever calls upon Him for guidance, provided the caller is a genuine believer and is doing his best to follow the path designated by God and His Apostle. This personal relationship of God and mankind is not a mere abstract conception but is highly disciplined and tightly organized under what Muslims call "ritualistic worship." God prescribed *Salat* (prayers), *Zakat* (alms), *Sawm* (fasting), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage) as rituals to guide true believers into communication with Him and to help them live in harmony with each other.<sup>27</sup> The *Qur'an* condemns those who neglect to perform these rituals and considers them sinners.

2. *The Family.* It is the law of existence that in all beings the basic unit is composed of the negative and the positive. The atom which is the basic unit of inanimates is mainly an inalienable marriage between the positive and the negative. The same thing exists in the eucaryote cell of any living organism. This scientific fact is referred to in the *Qur'an*: "And of everything we have created pairs."<sup>28</sup>

The basic unit of humankind is the family, the union between the male and the female: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)."<sup>29</sup> Marriage in Islam is prescribed for all individuals as soon as they are qualified for it, because the family is an institution vital for the healthy survival of the human race. While other creatures can survive on their own shortly after birth, humans need the protection of their parents for a considerable period of

<sup>23</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 48, 116.

<sup>24</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 70.

<sup>25</sup>*Qur'an*, 9: 105.

<sup>26</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 186.

<sup>27</sup>See chapter seven for a discussion of these applications of faith.

<sup>28</sup>*Qur'an*, 51: 49.

<sup>29</sup>*Qur'an*, 49: 13.

time. Because humans, unlike other creatures, have a mission in this world, they need to live together and collaborate in their efforts to achieve their goals. They require affection and sympathy which are the emotional nourishment of the soul. Feelings cultivated in the family towards children, spouses, parents and siblings prepare people to care about their fellowmen. The *Qur'an* stresses this fact of life in the strongest words, as God commands Muslims to obey and be kind to their parents.<sup>30</sup> To preserve and strengthen the family institution, the *Qur'an* detailed the laws of inheritance, specified the rights and obligations of husbands and wives and defined the rights of near relatives. By such laws, the *Qur'an* made the family the basis of the Muslim society.

3. *The Society.* The *Qur'an* teaches a new concept of human society. God classifies all people on earth, irrespective of their race or location, into two communities only: the believers and the unbelievers. Those who believe in Him, His Apostles and His Books are the *Ummah*. This community is duly bound to apply the Islamic doctrine and to accept its jurisdiction. It is a political society of which the absolute sovereign is Allah Who delegates His ruling power to the people. The people choose the best qualified persons among them to be the head of this state. The chosen ruler executes God's teachings and orders as outlined in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad).<sup>31</sup> The *Qur'an* instructs all believers to establish this political unit, the *Ummah*. The ideology of the *Ummah* is its constitution, i.e. the *Qur'an*. Citizens of the *Ummah* are required to achieve three major objectives:

a. *Welfare.* The utmost welfare, according to the *Qur'an*, can be achieved only when God's instructions are followed either voluntarily or by force. Those who violate *Qur'anic* laws are subject to severe penalties. Some violations specified in the *Qur'an* include homicide, aggression against individuals or property, theft, and conspiracy against the state. Other violations

specified by the Apostle include adultery and drunkenness. Muslims believe that application of divine laws and punishment are essential for the survival of the *Ummah*, as without a common ideology no human society can exist in unity.

Within the *Ummah*, mutual responsibility operates as a major principle contributing to the solidarity of the community. This principle comprises three aspects:

(1) *Mutual Economic Aid.* This responsibility is realized through *Zakat*.<sup>32</sup> This tax of at least two and a half percent collected from the net-worth of all wealth above subsistence level has to be spent on the poor, the indigent, and the needy as specified in the *Qur'an*.<sup>33</sup> However, if *Zakat* does not suffice to meet the minimum requirements of the needy, the rich are obligated to contribute the difference. In addition, Muslims are exhorted in the *Qur'an* to give charitably of their fortunes which originally belong to God. The *Qur'an* instructs: "And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift."<sup>34</sup> A translator comments on this verse as follows:

"With us, (Muslims) the worship of God is linked up with kindness—to parents, kindred, those in want, those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us. It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled."<sup>35</sup>

Mutual economic responsibility is not confined to the Muslims of the *Ummah*. All non-Muslims who choose to live in this Islamic state are supposed to accept its laws and accordingly are entitled to its benefits. Thus, they

<sup>30</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 23, 4: 36, 31: 14.

<sup>31</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 59.

<sup>32</sup>See chapter seven.

<sup>33</sup>*Qur'an*, 9: 60.

<sup>34</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 36, 30: 38, 2: 177, 4: 36.

<sup>35</sup>Yusuf Ali, *The Glorious Qur'an, Translation and Commentary*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 2nd. ed., 1977), p. 701.



share in the economic welfare of the community, paying a part of their wealth and receiving the benefits.

(2) *Mutual Social Responsibility*. If *oneness* is the first principle of Islam, the second would be commanding the good and the right, and eschewing the evil and the wrong. There are many *Qur'anic* verses emphasizing the application of this social doctrine; two of the verses are:

"Ye are the best of peoples evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God."<sup>36</sup>

God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin; and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice, and rebellion."<sup>37</sup>

In all of the verses concerning mutual responsibility God commands Muslims to enjoin *Ma'rouf* and to prohibit *Monkar*. The first means all matters that are considered by Islamic standards and traditions as righteous, good, kind, beneficent and friendly. *Monkar* is the antithesis of *Ma'rouf*. God thereby made it mandatory on Muslims as individuals to enjoin moral modes of behaviour and to see to it that vicious, bad, cruel acts are not done. Such a mandate can hardly be understood by any modern democratic or authoritarian society, if only because of the seeming impossibility of putting such moral values into practice. But in the Islamic state, this social mandate is well defined by *Qur'anic* instruction and by the *Hadith* (tradition). The limits of an individual's carrying out his moral obligations are also outlined in the *Qur'an* and are to be defined by the government according to social circumstances prevailing at the time.

The mutual social responsibility principle is based upon a still more fundamental issue which is Muslim brotherhood. A verse reads: "The Believers are but a

single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) Brothers, and fear God that ye may receive mercy."<sup>38</sup> This brotherhood is not merely an abstract moral value, but is a bond that has legal, economic and social implications and effects. Just as economic mutual obligations are emphasized in *Zakat*, here social brotherhood is emphasized, making every individual responsible for the spiritual and material welfare of all.

(3) *Mutual Security*. Citizens of the *Ummah* are mutually responsible for their individual and collective security. They are enjoined to protect one another as well as to protect their common cause:

"Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the faith, with their property and their persons, in the cause of God, as well as those who gave (them) asylum and aid—these are (all) friends and protectors one of another."<sup>39</sup>

In the remainder of the verse quoted above, as well as in subsequent verses, the principle of mutual security is firmly established. Any aggression against either the Muslim believer or non-Muslim citizen is considered an aggression against all members of the *Ummah* and must be repudiated by all, even if the aggressor is a Muslim. It is the responsibility of each and all citizens to curb any sort of tumult or oppression:

"And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong."<sup>40</sup>

"And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily God doth see all that they do."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 110. See also 3: 104, 7: 154, 9: 67, 71, 112.

<sup>37</sup>*Qur'an*, 16: 90.

<sup>38</sup>*Qur'an*, 49: 10, 3: 103, 9: 11.

<sup>39</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 72-75.

<sup>40</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 25.

<sup>41</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 39.

This suppression of tumult, oppression and transgression is the basis of *Jihad*, meaning striving for the cause of God, which cause is the propagation of peace and justice under the dogma of *oneness*.

b. *Da'wa* (Missionary Work). Once the *Ummah* is established, all its Muslim citizens are enjoined to propagate Islam, inviting all peoples to examine their religion and to join the peaceful welfare state. Many verses in the *Qur'an* address the "People of the Book"—Jews and Christians—asking them to believe in Islam, which Muslims accept as the religion of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Long passages of the *Qur'an* imply that peace on earth cannot be realized unless and until all people believe in one ideology and adopt the one true religion, which Muslims believe to be Islam.<sup>42</sup> Muslims are urged to reason kindly with non-Muslims, using wisdom and logic to persuade them to accept Islam. No Muslim is allowed to use force or violence in the course of inviting others to Islam. In fact, fighting is prohibited to Muslims except in cases of self-defense and when their human liberties are violated.

*Da'wa* makes certain demands on Muslims. They have to set a good example for others, living by the *Qur'anic* laws and leading an exemplary spiritual life. "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity."<sup>43</sup>

### C. OTHER CONTENTS

The *Qur'an*, as other Holy Books, makes of man the center of this life, urges him to increase his knowledge and to work hard to raise the standards of human society. It teaches Muslims the meaning of universality and it cultivates in them the sense of tolerance and justice.

Many verses of the *Qur'an* refer to pure scientific facts which were unknown to man at the time of the Revelation.

<sup>42</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 64-91, 5: 44-85.

<sup>43</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 104.

Such facts include the creation of life from the elements of water, the gravity of earth, the decrease of atmospheric pressure in higher altitudes, the growth and development of the human embryo. These facts are mentioned as signs of God's power of creation. Humans are exhorted to deliberate on these signs, to discover their secrets and to harness them for the well-being and interest of mankind.

Perhaps equally significant or miraculous as what is taught by the Holy Book is the effect which the *Qur'an* has on its reader. The words of the *Qur'an* touch the heart before it resounds in the mind. The miracle of this Holy Book reminds the Muslim of God and his own servitude to Him.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ISLAM AS A WAY OF LIFE

#### I. THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

Though faith is necessarily a matter that lies beyond the realm of the mind, yet there must be a basis for faith. Hence, the Muslims' faith is both spiritual and rational. The more "logical" one's faith is, the deeper and more operative it becomes. Five articles of faith constitute the Muslims' creed.

##### A. ONENESS (*Tawheed*)

The first article of faith in Islam is the absolute belief in the *oneness* of God. It is this principle around which the religion of Islam revolves. Oneness implies the complete denial of polytheism (a belief in the multiplicity of gods) and of associating anything with God. *Tawheed*, the Arabic word by which this basic principle is known, means unity. To declare his or her Islam, an individual professes belief in this first article of faith by reciting "LA ILAHA ILLALLAH" which means "There is no deity but Allah." This declaration is known as "AL-KALIMAH" which means "The Word." One who would become a member of the community of Islam needs to profess his belief in the absolute *oneness* or unity of Allah. Because of the Muslim's steadfast belief in the universality of God, anyone who professes such a faith is welcomed into Islam without regard to his race, color, nationality, or political loyalty. Because Allah is the universal God, the One God, Islam perceives all persons as equal under God's laws, to which all adhere. When one submits to Allah by professing Islam, he confesses God's power and heeds God's will as expressed in His laws which were in part revealed through His Apostles and in part manifested in His creation. True belief in AL-KALIMAH liberates the believer from all affinities other than affinity to God.

## B. ANGELS

Muslims believe in the existence of angels as spiritual functionaries for God. All that Muslims know about angels is what was revealed in the *Qur'an* or came as inspiration to Muhammad. God created angels to be creatures of a different nature than man, having no will or freedom of choice. In fact, God informed us in the *Qur'an* that they are inferior to humans as He commanded them to prostrate to Adam.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, they are not believed to be divine or sacred, nor to be able to intercede for humans before God. They are understood only as instruments used by God to help implement His universal plan. God's revelation to Muhammad, for example, came through the Angel Gabriel. Muslims believe that all angels are assigned specific functions by God. For instance, Muslims believe our daily deeds are scrupulously recorded in detail by two angels which accompany every individual day and night. They also believe that death takes place when a certain angel, acting under the command of God, withdraws one's soul from his body. The belief that angels do have a function does not contradict the fact that there is no material proof of their existence other than what was revealed to God's Apostles. Belief in angels helps the individual Muslim understand the mechanism of many metaphysical concepts.

## C. BOOKS OF GOD

Muslims believe that all Books which God has sent to mankind through His Apostles have the same purpose, i.e., to invite people to worship the One God, Allah. The *Qur'an*, the Book sent by God to Muhammad, provides the names of previous Books which Muslims accept as having been divinely revealed to previous prophets. The Books named in the *Qur'an* are the Books of Abraham,<sup>2</sup> the Torah of Moses,<sup>3</sup> the Zabur (Psalms) of David, and the Injil (Gospel) of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> There is no mention in the *Qur'an* of the names of Books

which might have been sent to other prophets, making it impossible for a Muslim to judge books claimed by other religions to be divinely revealed. The *Qur'an* teaches that the Books named above have been adulterated either through wrong translations, or by means of changes, omissions and additions that suited the purpose of certain people over the ages. It is a fact that all original texts of these Holy Books have been lost, and it is probable that no genuine copy of any of them exists in its original language. For example, Professor Bucaille writes of the Torah:

"Thus the Old Testament appears as a literary monument to the Jewish people; from its origins to the coming of Christianity. The books it consists of were written, completed and revised between the tenth and the first centuries B.C.... A Revelation is mingled in all these writings, but all we possess today is what men have seen fit to leave us. These men manipulated the texts to please themselves, according to the circumstances they were in and the necessities they had to meet."<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, about the New Testament he writes:

"Father Kannengiesser warns that 'one should not take literally' facts reported about Jesus by the Gospels, because they are 'writings suited to an occasion' or 'to combat', whose authors 'are writing down the traditions of their own community about Jesus.'"<sup>6</sup>

It is of interest to note here, that Muhammad challenged the Jews when they contested both his claim to prophethood and some judgments that had been revealed to him by asking them to bring the Torah and read through it.<sup>7</sup> God addressed Muhammad:

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 34.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 136, 3: 54, 4: 54.

<sup>3</sup>*Qur'an*, 5: 46, 3: 48.

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an*, 56: 27, 19: 30.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science* (Indianapolis, Ind. American Trust Publications, 1978), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Bucaille, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 93.



"Say: We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam)."<sup>8</sup>

Muslims do accept the main teachings in the existing Holy Books as they find such teachings consistent with the teaching of the *Qur'an*. However, they feel that each of these Books was addressed to a particular nation at a particular time in history. In contrast to this, they believe the *Qur'an* is universal, addressing all humans, establishing basic rules of moral and social behavior that apply to all peoples at all times. As a matter of fact, there is no Book that treats the problems of humans in such a comprehensive manner as does the *Qur'an*.

The attitude of Islam towards the Books of God has been beautifully and clearly spelled out in many *Qur'anic* verses. For example:

"It was We who revealed the Torah: therein was guidance and light.....If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what God has revealed, they are (no better than) unbelievers.....and in their footsteps We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him: We sent him al-Injil (the Gospel): therein was guidance and light.....Let the people of the Gospel judge by what God has revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what God has revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel. To thee (O Muhammad) We sent the Book in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and safeguarding it, so judge between them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that has come to you."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 84.

<sup>9</sup>*Qur'an*, 5: 47-51.

#### D. FAITH IN PROPHETS

Muslims believe that all apostles of God were inspired by Him to liberate people from the tyranny of their fellowmen and to help them lead a better life through acknowledging the basic principle of *oneness*. In this regard, all apostles are held in high respect by Muslims with the understanding that their missions differed widely according to their circumstances and times. This respect for all apostles is so much an element of a Muslim's faith that one who does not accept the apostles mentioned in the *Qur'an* is deficient in faith, and is considered an unbeliever:

"The Apostle (Muhammad) believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do (other) men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in God, His angels, His books, His Apostles. We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His Apostles."<sup>10</sup>

The *Qur'an* further tells us that God sent an apostle to every nation and he invited it to worship God and to eschew evil.<sup>11</sup> It is also mentioned therein that some of the apostles' stories have not been mentioned.<sup>12</sup> Muslims believe that apostles were technically Muslims and were in essence teaching Islam. As they succeeded one another, and as humanity was gradually evolving, their teachings moved from the simple basic principle of *oneness* to other issues concerning man's relations to God and society. This evolutionary process continued until the last Apostle, Muhammad, confirmed the previous messengers of God, addressed them to the optimum potential human perfection, and brought about a final comprehensive message that addresses itself to all the spiritual and mundane requirements of man.

All apostles, including Muhammad, are considered by Muslims to be human servants of God, chosen by Him to perform duties commissioned by Him. They are not "holy" or "sacred", but like all other humans, are helpless until

<sup>10</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 285.

<sup>11</sup>*Qur'an*, 16: 36.

<sup>12</sup>*Qur'an*, 40: 78.

empowered by God. They have no authority to intercede with God on behalf of His servants, nor can they, on their own, absolve any man of his guilt. Though he believes in all apostles, a Muslim must have faith that Muhammad was the true Prophet of God, the messenger that brought to the world the complete and perfect message, and that he was the last Apostle of God.

#### E. BELIEF IN LIFE AFTER DEATH

Muslims believe that there will be resurrection after death. They believe that the resurrection of all humans shall take place on a certain day which Muslims call *Yaum al-Qiyamah* and that on that day everybody shall be judged by God and shall have a fair recompense.

Every religion of God expects its adherents to accept a faith in the afterlife as taught by that religion. So it is in Islam. Despite the fact that we do not know much about life after death, Muslims understand that our souls will not be destroyed by death. One who believes in God believes in His justice being done in accordance with His laws. Muslims believe that God has preordained that there shall be judgment rendered on the Day of Judgment when those who have lived in accordance with God's laws shall be rewarded and those who have failed to live accordingly shall be severely punished. They believe that God grants the individual the freedom of choice while showing him the way that leads to happiness and finally to paradise. Within this liberty, God has ordained the law of reward and punishment.

Belief in life after death and in the Day of Judgment helps the Muslim to sense purpose and meaning in living:

1. The believer heeds God's orders and laws, anticipating God's reward and avoids His prohibitions, fearing His wrath.
2. The believer does what is good for the sake of the good and tries to please God by following His law, irrespective of what may befall him in his life.
3. The believer does not fear death as long as he cherishes his love for God because he is certain that God shall accept

him on the Day of Judgment. Such a feeling changes the person's whole outlook on life, freeing him from allegiances to other humans, to societal traditions and to temptations, leaving him with an allegiance to God alone.

A simple logic supplements the Muslims' belief in life after death. If it is axiomatic that for everything that has a beginning, there must be an end, then the life of the individual which definitely has a beginning must also have an end. But when did life begin and when will it end? A Muslim believes that his life began when God *willed* him to be, or when God uttered *His Word* commanding him to be.<sup>13</sup> The *Qur'an* tells us that man was first created from clay (water plus dust). Then after this first creation God made man's progeny from the union of the male sperm and the female ovum. But the individual that results from this union is given life by God's breathing into him something of His Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Thus, there is a metaphysical element in man, an element which is immortal and indestructible, i.e. his soul or spirit. Death simply means the separation of the material element from the non-material element, the body we bury in tombs, but the soul departs without being perceived or even felt. Muslims believe that both the material and the metaphysical components begin a new stage of life after their separation at the moment of death. This new stage of life constitutes the resurrection which is the reunion of the soul with the body. Muslims believe that God, who created man, also resurrects man and reconstructs him.

#### II. THE APPLICATION OF FAITH

Islam as a faith and a dynamic motivation does not confine itself to metaphysical connotations or philosophical concepts. It is built on five palpable pillars or cornerstones, each of which has its spiritual values interwoven into its physical texture, the same way mass and energy are fused or spirit and body co-exist in the living human being.

<sup>13</sup>*Qur'an*, 36: 82.

<sup>14</sup>*Qur'an*, 32: 7-9, 29: 15.



If faith can be sensed only when it is reflected in visible or tangible action, Islamic action can only be judged in accordance with the Islamic tenets which stand on the five pillars of Islam. In simple words, there can be no true Muslim nor a true Islamic society or nation unless these five pillars are well established, meticulously observed and staunchly preserved. They are mandatory for both the individual and the Islamic community in which he lives. This is a crucial issue which has taken on more significance in the last few decades when Muslims have been forcibly subjected to non-Islamic cultures in which religion is divorced from secular life.

As the individual cell cannot survive by itself but must live in a specific tissue having specific qualifications, a human individual likewise cannot survive by himself but must live in a specific society having specific qualifications. In the case of atoms and cells, agglomeration takes place by innate, involuntary reactions. In the case of humans, the gathering process takes place by voluntary choice and free will. In either case, the phenomenon of unity is an inevitable and immutable law of existence. This phenomenon explains why Islam addresses both the individual and the society simultaneously when prescribing the duties comprised in its five pillars discussed in this chapter.

#### A. SHAHADAH (THE WITNESS)

A Muslim's first duty is to declare and publicly confess, *ASHADU AN LA ILAHA-ILLALLAH, WA ANNA MUHAMMADAN RASUL-ULLAH*; this means "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Apostle." The first part of this confession of faith we dealt with in the preceding section in the discussion of *oneness*. The second part was referred to in the discussion of faith in apostles. We may simply add here that such faith in the absolute *oneness* of Allah and in the prophethood of Muhammad must be continuously borne in mind and translated into the Muslims' daily actions. Submission to anybody or to anything other than Allah is a breach of faith and a violation of the essence of this Islamic confession. Moreover, any disobedience or denial of Muhammad's orders is a breach of the confession. If a person believes in God as the

Creator, the All-knowing and the Omnipotent, he must obey His commandments and observe His teachings. The Muslim believes that Muhammad is the Apostle of God, and that the *Qur'an* is the word of God whereby He ordained, "He who obeys the Apostle, obeys God".<sup>15</sup>

The utterance of the *Shahadah* qualifies the individual to enter into a covenant with God and the Muslim "Ummah" or community. By this he incurs upon himself definite obligations and acquires specific rights towards other members of the community. Laxity in performing rituals, or even sin, can be pardoned by God. But to deny the "witness" and associate anything with God is unforgivable.<sup>16</sup>

Upon pronouncing the *Shahadah*, the individual becomes obligated to follow the teachings and to carry out the enjoinders detailed in *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, (the instructions of the Apostle). These entail a long list of detailed directives governing the activities and behavior of the individual in his private life, in his family, and in his society. Primarily, these directives persuade the Muslim to be sincere to God, to be just with himself and to behave justly toward others, and to feel and practice his absolute freedom from any servitude other than to God. These same values automatically earn him the rights of equality with others, freedom of thought, speech and action, and of living in peace with others.

#### B. SALAT (MANDATORY PRAYERS OF WORSHIP)

*Salat* is a difficult word to translate. Professor I. al-Faruqi is justified in objecting to translating *Salat* as "prayers", because in English, the word prayer refers to an act that is "...not necessarily formal. It is not obligatory, has no prescribed style, and can be recited almost anywhere, anytime."<sup>17</sup> Al-Faruqi suggested the word "worship" as a better translation, but, in my view, worship has a very broad

<sup>15</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 80. See also 3: 32, 4: 59, 5: 92, 47:33.

<sup>16</sup>"God forgives not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases". *Qur'an* 4: 48.

"God forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this." *Qur'an* 4: 116.

<sup>17</sup>Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi, *Islam* (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communication, 1979), p. 21

meaning that includes other rituals and deeds as well as Salat. I prefer to use the Arabic word *'Ibadat* for worship and qualify *Salat* as *mandatory* prayers of worship. Linguistically, the Arabic word *Salat* implies a sense of commitment. It is also used in the sense of "invocation."<sup>18</sup> In the Islamic lexicon, the word refers to the formal and designated ritual repeated five times each day which is enjoined by God in the *Qur'an* and detailed in the *Sunnah*.

The times prescribed for the individual Muslim's daily ritual of *Salat* are dawn (before sunrise), mid-day, afternoon, dusk (after sunset), and night. *Salat* is a combination of physical and spiritual exercise aimed at the disciplining and edification of the individual. Before starting any *Salat*, the individual must undergo ablution, an act of physical purification accomplished by washing and cleansing any dirt from within or without his person. The ablution is a physical purification and a spiritual preparation for being in the presence of God. Specific words must be uttered and specified movements must be performed each time *Salat* is exercised. The formal physical movements of the Muslim during his *Salat*, combined with the holy words that he pronounces, represent the mere existence of the human being, and remind the Muslim that matter in all its forms is created to help him fulfill the main objective of his life in this world which is to worship God. In short, *Salat* is the harbinger of peace and the herald of love. The prescribed *Salat* is the minimum a Muslim must perform, but he may, of course, pray as much as he likes. The Prophet Muhammad used to perform *Salat* on different occasions. Such prayers were other than prescribed ones.

*Salat* can be performed in any clean place, either individually or collectively. Any Muslim can lead the prayers since there is no priesthood in Islam. Mosques are available for *Salat*, but although Muslims are encouraged to pray in the mosque, they are not obligated to do so except on Fridays for the *Jum'ah* (congregational) prayers. At noon every Friday, Muslims listen to a sermon delivered by the *Imam* (the leader) and offer their collective prayers. This collective weekly prayer is mandatory, but Fridays are not a "Sabbath" in that

Muslims are not forbidden to lead their normal business activities on this day, though they traditionally make a holiday of Friday. Islamically speaking, those who neglect performing *Salat* commit a grave mistake and are considered offenders against the law in an Islamic state.<sup>19</sup> If they declare their indifference in public they are punished.

*Salat* has great significance to a true Muslim as it is his basic instrument for applying his faith. Through *Salat*, the Muslim makes an earnest effort to communicate with God, to foster the power of good ingrained in him by the Word of God Who created him. It helps him to discover the eternal divine light and to be guided by it. It accentuates his faculties of awareness, sharpens his conscientious judgments, and boosts his noble desire to increase his knowledge. Moreover it confirms his submission to God and His commandments. In its essence, *Salat* starts by glorifying Allah, invoking His mercy, help and guidance, continues by representing man's humility and submission to his Creator, and ends by complimenting God and His Apostle.<sup>19</sup>

### C. ZAKAT (MANDATORY ALMS)

There is no word in English or any other language that can be used as a literal translation for *Zakat*. Linguistically, it has two meanings—purification and growth. Islamically, *Zakat* means the right of God to a Muslim's wealth. It is a mandatory tax which, in an Islamic state, should be exacted from the wealth of all Muslim citizens whose total net worth at a specified day of the year is above a certain designated minimum. It is not an income tax, nor a growth-capital tax. It is simple and precisely a tax on the net worth of every Muslim's wealth irrespective of his gains or losses.

The state collects *Zakat* and spends it according to directives given in the *Qur'an*<sup>20</sup> and the *Sunnah*. Beneficiaries of that tax are mostly the poor, the indigent, the slaves or captives, and the wayfarer. The minimum amount of this tax is 2.5 percent per annum, which is a substantial amount. The moral behind it is manifold:

<sup>18</sup>For more details see Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1977), pp. 55-86.

<sup>20</sup>*Qur'an*, 9: 60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*.



1. *Zakat* reminds the Muslim of the fact that all that he possesses belongs to God who is the Lord of everything. Man is only God's vicegerent, an agent acting on His behalf.

2. The law of mutual responsibility and mutual participation must be observed. The Muslim community is a unit where all the members must live in solidarity and cooperation. Islam teaches brotherhood and love and means to see these values physically implemented. Nothing is more expressive in this ethical and moral context than sharing one's own wealth, not in terms of voluntary granting but in terms of mutual human rights.

3. *Zakat* functions as a social security for all. Those who have enough money today pay from what they have. If they need money tomorrow, they will get what is necessary to help them live decently. A minimum of 2.5 percent of the gross national product can be considered more than enough to help everyone live above the subsistence level.

4. The *Zakat* payer pays his dues to Allah as an act of worship, a token of submission and an acknowledgement of gratitude. The receiver of *Zakat* receives it as a grant from God out of His bounty, a favor for which the receiver is thankful to God as the Lord of everything in existence. Seen in this way, *Zakat* eliminates both the embarrassment of the poor which usually accompanies the receiving of charity and the false pride which often afflicts the rich who give.

5. Economically, *Zakat* is the best check against hoarding. Those who do not invest their wealth, but prefer to save it or hoard it, would see their wealth dwindling year after year at the rate of the payable *Zakat*. The tax necessarily helps increase production and stimulates supply because it is a redistribution of income that enhances demand by putting more real purchasing power in the hands of the poor. This explains the idea behind conferring the meaning of growth of wealth upon the ritual of *Zakat*.

6. By paying a tax on his wealth as dues to Allah, the Muslim feels a certain satisfaction and contentment which helps him feel more "pure" in his worship and closer to his Creator.

The first meaning implied in the word *Zakat* is purification. The wealth itself is purified by the tax that goes to the needy and to implement the cause of God.

#### D. SAWM OR SIYAM (FASTING)

Fasting is an ancient religious practice exercised in different ways by various monotheistic religions. In Islam, Muslims fast for the full ninth lunar month, which is called Ramadan. The fast starts at dawn and ends at sunset every day of Ramadan.

During the hours of fasting, the Muslim abstains from eating, drinking, smoking, sexual intercourse, defamation of others even if he is defamed by them, and letting his anger take hold of him. The experience of fasting during Ramadan, which comes during the different seasons over the years since it is calculated by the moon, is of genuine advantage to the believer. It is a practical exercise of will, of self control, and of civil conduct. Though the individual is allowed to eat whatever he wishes and to enjoy sex after breaking the fast, he often feels that indulgence is not best for him. After a few days of fasting, one develops the power of restraint and rejoices in his ability to master his own desires and eccentricities.

Fasting has a spiritual as well as a physical aspect. The recommended recitation of the entire *Qur'an* during this month, the extra *Salat* performed in the nights of Ramadan, added to the feeling that one is voluntarily fasting to please God—all of these elate the soul and raise the morale of the individual. From the social standpoint, fasting puts all believers on the same level before God. The rich and the distinguished feel the same hunger as the poor and the common, and all are subject to the same code of abstention. The Prophet exhorted Muslims to be more hospitable and generous philanthropists and to care more than ever for the poor and the needy during this month. Muhammad related

that God ordained that everything a person does has consequences for himself, or is done for himself, except fasting, which is done for God's sake. Although fasting is done for God, God rewards man for his faithfulness and the one who fasts reaps many benefits from the experience. During the month of Ramadan, the believer achieves a better health owing to a more balanced regular diet, a better character owing to self control and restraint, a better social status owing to communication with others whether in giving or receiving charity, and a better reward from God owing to the faster's obedience and submission.

### E. HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

Pilgrimage to Mecca was known long before Islam; most probably it started during the days of Ibrahim and Isma'il. As chapter two indicates, the *Qur'an* says that God made the "House", the Ka'ba, a sacred place of assembly and a sanctuary. God instructed believers to take the Ka'ba as a place of prayer, and covenanted with Ibrahim and Isma'il that they should sanctify His House for those who surround it or who use it as a retreat in which to pray and submit themselves to God.<sup>21</sup> The Ka'ba was meant to be a sanctuary from the time of its construction by Ibrahim even throughout the time when Arabs deviated from monotheism and worshipped idols. Other verses of the *Qur'an* refer to the ritual of pilgrimage as having been established in the days of Ibrahim who himself was a Muslim in that he wholeheartedly submitted to the will of God. Though pilgrimage became the custom of pagans, Islam reconfirmed this ritual for Muslims.

Every Muslim is enjoined to perform *Hajj* at least once in his or her lifetime provided the Muslim has reached the age of maturity and can financially and physically afford to make the trip. *Hajj* starts on the eighth day of Zul al-Hijja, the last month of the lunar year. Before entering Mecca, the male pilgrim has to take off his clothes, bathe, and put on special garments composed of two plain white sheets that have not been sewn. The female pilgrim puts on a simple long gown

and covers her hair, but not her face or her hands. From this moment until the time of sacrifice near the end of the pilgrimage, pilgrims abstain from uttering any harsh word, from shaving or cutting their hair or fingernails and from any violent action, especially killing. Not only homicide is forbidden, but also killing an animal or a bird or even an insect is strictly prohibited, unless health or life is threatened.

On arriving at Mecca, pilgrims first circumambulate the Ka'ba seven times, and next cover the distance between the adjacent two hills of al-Safa and al-Marwah seven times in hurried steps.<sup>22</sup> The ritual is to commemorate the condition of Hajar, the mother of Isma'il, supplicating God to help her in her desperate search for water for herself and her infant son to drink. The story is told that she rushed between the two hills in agony until she found water springing out from under the foot of her infant son. The following day pilgrims proceed to 'Arafat, a mountain about twelve miles from Mecca, which is considered to be the place where Ibrahim took Isma'il to sacrifice him in response to God's order; there pilgrims perform the midday and afternoon prayers and listen to a memorial sermon commemorating Ibrahim's exemplary faith in and submission to God's Will. Before sunset, they proceed to Mina, a place about eight miles from 'Arafat, passing by a valley called al-Muzdalifa where they offer their dawn prayer. In Mina they throw pebbles at three pillars in a symbolic revolt against Satan who is considered the instigator of evil.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Though many western authors allege with the orientalist Guillaume, that "One of the most important acts in the pilgrim ceremonial is the kissing of the Black Stone set in a wall of the Ka'ba" (Islam p. 70), such is not the case. Pilgrims do, however, try to touch or to kiss the stone, not because it is an act of the ritual, but because it was revealed that Muhammad touched it. The pilgrim is *not* required either to touch the Black Stone or to kiss it. It is impossible that the one million pilgrims could touch the stone during the short time devoted for Tawaf or circumambulation of the Ka'ba.

<sup>23</sup>Though the orientalist Rodinson, in his book *Mohammad* (Vintage Books, 1974 p. 284), suggests the Prophet had considered stone-throwing a pagan symbolic act, surely the Prophet, a confirmed enemy of paganism, would not have included such a ritual had it indeed been a pagan practice. In my view, there is nothing pagan whatsoever in the act of throwing the stones. Muslims prostrate before the Ka'ba, but they do not worship it. They rush between the two hills, al-Safa and al-Marwah, but they do not sanctify them. They drink from the well Zamzam—the spring which was discovered

<sup>21</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 125, 126, 127.



There, they kill a camel or a sheep as an oblation, commemorating the incident of sacrifice offered by Ibrahim when God absolved him from killing his son Isma'il. At this moment, pilgrims are allowed to wear their usual garments and resume their normal life. On the fifth and last day, they go to Mecca again for a farewell visit during which they perform the same circumambulation of the Ka'ba and the run between al-Safa and al-Marwah.<sup>24</sup>

Pilgrimage is an impressive, magnanimous experience in a Muslim's life, during which he gives all his body and soul to the ritual. In the House of God, the Muslim entirely submits to his Creator, asking for forgiveness and invoking His mercy and guidance. He exerts a genuine effort to communicate with God who promises true believers His forgiveness and response to their prayers. The individual pilgrim, though he stands in a crowd of a million other pilgrims, does feel a sense of privacy and addresses God as if he were in complete seclusion. The explanation is not indifference or insensitivity; on the contrary, a peculiar hypersensitive feeling of peace, love and tolerance prevails over the Muslim in this situation. This writer finds it extremely difficult to analyze the feelings of the pilgrim. It seems, however, that the sincere, candid and persistent call upon God to accept the repentance of all pilgrims and to guide them toward what He regards as good for them—this overwhelming desire coupled with the conviction that God is there to hearken and respond—sheds peace on the hearts of all. The mind of the pilgrim is already oriented toward peace, as he knows that he should at this time

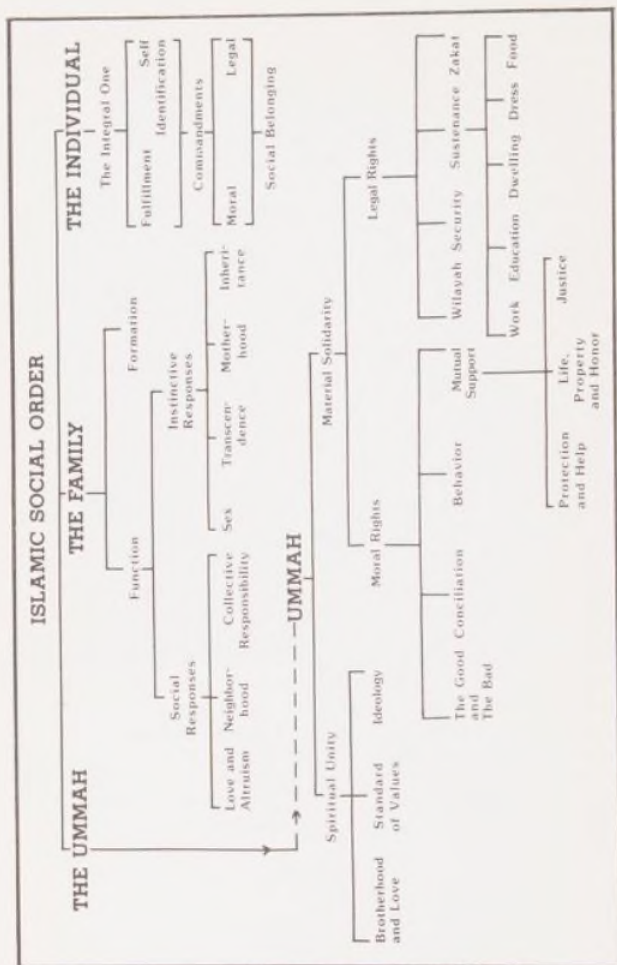
by Hajar—but they do not defy it. All Islamic rituals, as we have seen, take some physical or material shape, but always with the very clear understanding of the Muslim that such physical or material outer cast is a form for the deeper essence, which is the worship of the One God. To us, the continuation of some acts in performing the Hajj ritual is only another presumption that such acts existed, if not from the days of Ibrahim and Isma'il, then from previous days of some of the multiple Prophets who preceded Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula.

<sup>24</sup>Although Guillaume says (p. 70) that a visit to the Prophet's tomb is part of the pilgrimage or at least something that should be done once in every Muslim's lifetime, yet nowhere in Islam is the Muslim required to make such a visit.

not be callous toward any person for any reason, that he should not harm a human or even an insect, and that he should entirely forget the lure of material life. As is true in the performance of all rituals, every individual has his own impressions, motives, responses and experiences. However, it can be said that pilgrimage leaves some sort of imprint on every pilgrim though the depth of the imprint will vary among individuals.

One feeling common to all pilgrims is the sense of fraternity which results from the uniformity of dress, the intermingling of persons without regard to distinctions of race or rank, and the performance of the rituals in a precise and uniform manner, all of which are reflections of the principle of equality of all humans before their Creator. A pilgrim has to heed and care for the other pilgrims that surround him day and night during the constant performance of rituals. It is inevitable that some pilgrim, a king or a pauper, will step on the feet of another or push him or even accidentally hit him on the head, but the reaction is always a smile of real pardon or some other gesture of tolerance and friendship.

The sense of social solidarity is further underscored by the offering of an oblation near the end of pilgrimage. The sacrifice of a camel or a sheep is meant to remind the Muslim that although God is not in need of that meat, humans who have wealth must thank God by giving to the deprived and the poor. The gathering of Muslims on pilgrimage from the four corners of the earth implies solidarity. They are supposed to become acquainted with each other, to discuss their problems and to put their heads together to find solutions to problems affecting the welfare of all. This social aspect of pilgrimage has been gradually reshaping and maturing in the last decade after having been neglected for centuries. Finally, pilgrimage inspires a Muslim to think of Islam as a religion initiated in ancient times by Abraham and continuing throughout all ages until life no longer exists on earth.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE SOCIAL ORDER

From an Islamic perspective, to use a metaphor, man is a nucleus, the family is his plasma, and society is his organismic tissue. As in any organism, these three elements are inseparable and interdependent. They co-exist best when they function together in proper balance and harmony. Therefore, according to Islam, there is no contradiction between the interests of the individual, the welfare of the family and the interests of the society.

#### I. THE INDIVIDUAL

The main objective of the Islamic social order is, in fact, to strike this proper balance without which the individual cannot achieve either fulfillment or self-identification. This fact of life, which is a law of existence, is so subtle and intricate that people, if left to their own judgment, might not grasp it. Because man is incapable of totally understanding himself, he is prone to fail in establishing a proper equilibrium in his relationship with his family and his society. To protect people from the serious consequences of failure and imbalance, Islam presents a comprehensive, integrated package of rules and laws that guarantees an optimum degree of happiness, i.e., fulfillment and self-identification.

##### A. FULFILLMENT AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Fulfillment is that self-satisfaction derived from doing what a person believes is right and worth doing. Fulfillment is the achievement of goals and can only be realized through the knowledge and application of the laws of existence. Self-identification is that incessant, instinctive urge to explore our inner-selves and the metaphysics surrounding our lives. Owing to the nature of man, self-identification is dependent upon his relationship to some being other than himself. This



relationship casts a reflection upon the individual, prescribing his qualifications. Fulfillment and self-identification are two sides of a single coin which is the human inner self. They continuously interact and intertwine within a person, forming his values and shaping his mannerisms.

The inner self can be divided into the domain of the mind and the domain of the spirit. God gives a person a mind to be used for the person's own benefit, or simply as a means to learn and to increase his knowledge of the laws of existence. Knowledge is the key to fulfillment as well as the key to belief. It is the result of observation, deliberation and experience. The *Qur'an* exhorts people to observe the signs of the Creator as reflected on earth and in the heavens and to derive logical conclusions from these signs.<sup>1</sup> Logical argument is the means of establishing God's *oneness*, and knowledgeable persons are blessed by Him.<sup>2</sup> The first word revealed to Muhammad was "Read," implying that people must learn and increase their knowledge. It is our enlightened intellect that teaches us how to behave towards God and towards others, thus realizing and maximizing our fulfillment.

#### B. LEGAL AND MORAL CODES

To this end, Islam prescribes for its adherents a code of behavior and a set of legal and moral rules based on the belief of complete submission to God, on logical thinking and on instinctive urges. Islam treats man necessarily as a social being whose welfare and happiness are compatible with and dependent upon the welfare and happiness of his family and society. The rules derive from the basic philosophy of *oneness*. To achieve the utmost of fulfillment and self-identification, man must rise to the state of the "integral one." To achieve this integrated condition, he should strive to eliminate any schizophrenic tendencies within himself in order that his exterior self will reflect his interior self. Such integration is a high standard of human perfection, and the more closely individuals approach it, the saner their society becomes. In

such an integrated state, individuals achieve the most esteemed values: honesty, truthfulness, courage and genuineness.

Nothing helps an individual to reach the stage of the "integral one" more than submission to God—the absolute One. Humans are made of "clay"<sup>3</sup> and "water,"<sup>4</sup> a constitution which requires material satisfaction. However, if people devote most of their efforts to satisfying their physical natures they reduce themselves to the level of animals and plants. But if they try to develop their spiritual faculties by using their material potentialities as a means of communicating with God and of submitting themselves to Him, they feel better and behave better. Thereby they can gradually approach their goal of the "integral one."

To help the Muslim improve himself, Islam prescribes some legal duties and some moral obligations. On the legal side are the commandments prohibiting the major sins and enjoining righteousness and good:

"Say: Come, I will rehearse what God hath (really) prohibited you from:  
Join not anything as equal with Him;  
Be good to your parents;  
Kill not your children on a plea of want—we provide sustenance for you and for them;  
Come not nigh to shameful deeds, whether open or secret;  
Take not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: that doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.  
And come not nigh to the orphan's property except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength;  
Give measure and weight with (full) justice;—  
No burden do we place on any soul, but that which it can bear,—  
Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned;

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 191.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 18: 65, 35: 28.

<sup>3</sup>*Qur'an*, 6: 2.

<sup>4</sup>*Qur'an*, 1: 30.

And fulfill the covenant of God:  
Thus He commands you, that ye may remember."<sup>5</sup>

These commandments and many others are meant to be enforced. Those who do not observe them are subject to punishment. Islam considers retribution to be a healthy procedure of justice which is essential for peace and social welfare. The principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is consistent with the simple law of action and reaction. Belief in retribution serves two purposes—it acts as a deterrent from breaking the laws, and it induces those who have the law on their side to forgive.

Shameful deeds are subject to physical punishment once they affect any member of the society or even are publicly committed. Alcohol, drugs, slander, back-biting, gambling and the like are prohibited and considered punishable crimes. Cheating in any manner is prohibited and considered a violation of the Islamic law that subjects the offender to penalty. Perjury and falsehood under all circumstances are considered moral sins and public crimes. But above all, whenever an individual enters into an agreement with others, invoking the witness of God, he is contracting a covenant with Him. If he violates this covenant, he exposes himself both to the wrath of God and to the punishment of the law.

The moral code in Islam is extremely rich and comprehensive, springing from the Muslim's awareness of his relationship to God. Heeding God, the Muslim observes His teachings and follows His commandments. In so doing, he achieves caring and forgiveness, patience and kindness, modesty and humility, truthfulness and honesty, chastity and cleanliness. Almost every page of the Holy *Qur'an* presents a moral value to be observed. Islam views human beings as endowed with an instinctive yearning for what is divine and godly and opens the way to those who try to respond to their innate desire for self-improvement and moral development. In fact, Islam incorporates the moral values of the individual into his societal and political functions. Consequently, if an individual fails to apply the moral code to his personal life, he cannot be entrusted with applying the law (*Shari'a*) to the community (*Ummah*).

<sup>5</sup>*Qur'an*, 6: 151-152; see also 17: 23-38.

## II. THE FAMILY

The family is a group of persons bound together by the bond of blood ties and/or marital relationships.<sup>6</sup> (The term blood ties implies that parents, throughout the generations of the family, have been married.) In Islamic terminology, the family includes all the descendants of a person and those who are entitled to a share of his inheritance. The family institution, according to Islam, is the only natural atmosphere in which an individual can be reared and have his biological need for love, relatedness, human transcendence, fulfillment and self-identification satisfied. Since marriage is the only means by which to establish a family, Islam makes marriage mandatory on all Muslims who can physically and financially afford it. It forbids all extra-marital sexual relationships, homosexuality and adoption, as none of these can establish either the blood relationship or the biologically natural marital bond.

### A. MARRIAGE

The family in Islam, then, starts with marriage which is a free civil contract in which the man expressly and publicly proposes to the woman and the woman—or her legal representative—accepts. Other conditions necessary for the validity of the contract are:

1. The free will of both parties who must be of marriageable age;
2. A dowry paid by the man to the woman;
3. At least two witnesses to the contract;
4. And an explicit intention on the part of both the man and the woman to maintain continuity of the marriage.

Moreover, any special conditions regarding their matrimonial life which either party deems necessary and

<sup>6</sup>Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1975), p. 118.



binding are appropriately expressed at this time. For instance, the woman can declare her right to divorce her husband at any future time without any judicial procedure or without legal cause. She can also insist upon living in a certain city or preserve her right to work. Yet, no condition that violates any Islamic rule is considered valid or binding on either party even if it is mutually agreed upon at the time of contracting.

Once the contract is concluded, the woman becomes the wife of the man and acquires legal and moral rights and obligations, even if the marriage has not been consummated. Legally, both husband and wife acquire the right of inheritance towards each other. The husband becomes responsible for the protection and sustenance of his wife, and she, in turn, becomes responsible to look after his household and to cohabit with him. The Muslim wife keeps her maiden name without adding her husband's name to hers. She is also entitled to keep all her wealth with no obligation to discuss any of her financial affairs with her husband.

In the marriage contract, both spouses make a covenant with God to observe His teachings and enjoinders as expressed in the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. They acknowledge the divine qualification of marriage as an institution built on love, peace and equanimity, compassion and serenity, comfort and appeasement. The *Qur'an* contains numerous verses<sup>7</sup> which explain the moral value of marriage, affirming its importance as the institution which produces and nurtures children. Mates seek peace and tranquility, trust and love in their relationship. The marriage is characterized by kindness, equality and compassion.<sup>8</sup> However, Islam considers the husband the head of the family as a result of both his biological constitution<sup>9</sup> and his full responsibility for the sustenance of the family. Though the Holy *Qur'an* gives the man a "degree" over the woman, he is not considered to have preferential superiority. His manhood itself confers

upon him "instrumental leadership"; "in all but a very few societies, instrumental roles, which include political and economic leadership, are played by the husband-father, while expressive roles are played by the wife-mother."<sup>10</sup> In all cases, and consequent upon the covenant with God, neither spouse is supposed to follow the other if either of them violates the *Shari'a*. Accordingly, the obedience of the wife to her husband is confined to his role of husband and father. Islam does not require any Muslim to obey others in contravention to the religion.

### 1. Rights of the Wife

The husband's material obligations to his wife are two-fold—the dower, which is a gift of money, and maintenance, which is provision for her material needs. Both the dower and maintenance are the right of the wife. In most Muslim marriages, a part of the dower is paid on or before concluding the marriage contract, while the other part, which is generally the bigger one, is considered a deferred debt, paid on demand. The wife has the right to call for her dower at any time, provided the money is available. If divorce takes place, or the husband dies, the debt becomes due and must be paid before any debt owed other persons.

Maintenance is an on-going obligation as the wife is entitled to have all her material needs met within the tradition customary to the environment in which the couple lives and within the husband's financial resources. God says:

"Let the women live the same style as ye live, according to your means....

Let the man of means spend according to his means and the man whose means are restricted, let him spend according to what God has given him."<sup>11</sup>

The wife's right to maintenance is enforced by law. Not only

<sup>7</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 1, 7: 107, 30: 21

<sup>8</sup>*Qur'an*, 7: 107.

<sup>9</sup>For additional discussion of this point see M. Abu Saud, *Sex Roles in Muslim Families of U.S.A.* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publication, 1979), pp. 19-21.

<sup>10</sup>Hammudah Abdalati *The Family Structure in Islam* (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1977), p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>*Qur'an*, 65: 6 ff.

may the wife divorce her husband for his failure to meet this obligation, but also she may use his money to pay for a legal suit against him.

The moral rights of the wife entitle her to fair and kind treatment, compassion and love which she offers to her husband in return. She also has a sexual right, so that if the husband deserts her without a justifiable reason, he would be wrong and she can take him to court. The wife's sexual right entitles her to bear children. If the husband is sterile, she is entitled to divorce. If he does not want children, he must seek her consent.

## 2. Rights of the Husband

The husband's rights are mostly moral rights, since the wife is not required to contribute to the expenses of maintaining the household. Most of his rights prohibit certain actions on the part of the wife. The obligation of the husband to protect his honor requires chastity on the part of his wife. It is obligatory that she does not allow or encourage any advances to be made to her by anybody other than her husband. To the same end, she may not permit any male who is not a *mahram*<sup>12</sup> to enter the house without her husband's permission or when she is alone. She should not accept a present from a non-*mahram*, or give one to him without the consent of her husband. She may not deny herself to her husband at any time without a legitimate excuse; on the contrary she must make herself desirable for him. As she is entitled to bear children, the husband is also entitled to have children. Thus, she is not allowed to avoid conception without his consent. The few material obligations of the wife also prohibit certain actions. She is required not to dispose of the husband's possessions without his permission, nor is she allowed to spend his money extravagantly. Finally, it is the wife's obligations to obey and serve her husband in equity.

<sup>12</sup>A *mahram* is a person who cannot marry a woman consequent upon a blood or a marital bond, e.g. the son, the brother, the nephew, the father-in-law, etc.

## 3. Rights of Children

Children have specified rights which are incumbent upon both parents. Since children cannot survive without emotional and material support, parental love must be translated into positive care and understanding. Children are entitled to full maintenance, i.e. provision for their physical needs, a reasonable education and health care. In addition, they must be taught by their parents the norms of behavior acceptable to their society. If children misbehave in such a way that causes harm to others, their parents are legally responsible for the harm done.

Because it considers motherhood to be instinctive in women, Islam requires that the mother provide more care and attention to the children than her husband is responsible for. The father's responsibility toward his children is to provide material maintenance and moral guidance.

The rights of children extend to the right of legitimacy whereby a child is entitled to be born within wedlock. As soon as the child is conceived, he or she acquires the right to life. Abortion is prohibited after a certain stage of fetus life and cannot at any stage be exercised at the discretion of only one parent. Many Muslim jurists consider that abortion is a great sin and that it is prohibited.

The parent-child relationship is very much stressed in Islamic social life, making the care of the parents the full responsibility of their children when the parents become too old to look after themselves. God commands Muslims never to offend their parents, but to obey them and care for them in their old age:

"Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor."<sup>13</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad indicated that the righteous mother

<sup>13</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 23.



brings up righteous children, and that the striving for the well-being of the parents is equal to the striving for the cause of God.

#### 4. Rights of Relatives

Relatives in the Shari'a, are of two categories—those who have legal rights and those who do not. The first are members of the family and, as such, enjoy a privileged situation. They are entitled to kind treatment and hospitable reception by other family members. Moreover, they are entitled to receive charity from family members before others.<sup>14</sup> In addition to their privileges, family members are responsible for attempting to correct or compensate for any mistakes made by an individual member.<sup>15</sup>

Islam prescribes that all relatives must receive gentle treatment and charitable reception from the family but more distant relatives receive charity after the first kin. God says, "And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want and to the wayfarer..."<sup>16</sup>

#### B. FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

The family as a unit in the Islamic social fabric has two main functions—response to instinctive human requirements, and realization of vital social values. Instinctively, the family offers a secure, healthy and honorable sense of motherhood to the married woman. It creates a wholesome atmosphere in which sex is practised in a loving relationship. In the *Qur'an* marriage is called "nikah" which literally means sexual intercourse. Muslims are not ashamed to use the word used by God for the noblest of human relations. The Prophet quotes God as saying, "I am al-Rahman (the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful). I have derived al-Rahim (the womb) from My Name."

Another instinctive human desire satisfied through the family institution is the desire for continuation in life. This

desire prompts people to build and produce for the future. Humans, aware of their short lives, long for transcendence and immortality. For this purpose, they work to leave behind them a reminder of their having lived. A person's progeny is a part of him and carries his name; therefore, it is not rare to see fathers forming businesses and preparing their children to take them over and keep them running after the father's death. Islam translates this instinctive urge for immortality into a highly organized institution of inheritance, whereby the individual's longing is satisfied at the same time the solidarity of the family is strengthened.

Regarding the realization of basic social values as a function of the family, Islam declares that since humans have the same origin by virtue of their creation, they are enjoined to live together in solidarity and peace. At the time of the creation of the first individual and his mate, the law of human reproduction came into existence.<sup>17</sup> Reproduction, a function of the family, is a means to a further end—the formation of a loving human society and the worship of God:

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that he may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you."<sup>18</sup>

To live together in peace, people must respect and love each other. Such feelings, essential for human societies, can only be nurtured in the family where love and tranquility prevail. The *Qur'an* explains that it is a sign of God that He has created for men, of themselves, mates to seek in their company peace and tranquility, and set between themselves mutual love and mercy.<sup>19</sup> The family teaches altruism as well, a value vital for any loving society. In fact, there cannot be true love unless there is altruism. To love others as much as

<sup>14</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 177

<sup>15</sup>Such responsibility is called in Arabic al-'Aqilah.

<sup>16</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 26; see also 2: 177; 4: 8, 36; 17: 26.

<sup>17</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 1.

<sup>18</sup>*Qur'an*, 49: 13.

<sup>19</sup>*Qur'an*, 30: 21.

one loves himself is a pre-requisite for genuine faith, according to the Prophet Muhammad. For example, Islam prescribes the right of neighbors whereby a believer is enjoined to care for his neighbors. The Prophet said he who gets his meals throughout a day while his neighbor is hungry must question his own belief. Furthermore, Muhammad stated that the Angel Gabriel, during a revelation continued to recommend the neighbor to the extent that "I thought he would give him a share in inheritance."<sup>20</sup> God enjoins Muslims "to do good to your parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, adjacent neighbors and neighbors who are strangers."<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the responsibility of the family for the acts of the individual member lends credibility to all—to the individual as a representative of his family, to the family as a unit standing behind its individual members, and to the society as a collectivity where rights and obligations of all persons are secured.

### III. THE UMMAH OR COMMUNITY

The goal of the Muslim's life is to worship God and to serve His cause of truth and justice. This worship is performed with a full awareness that from Him came The Word that ordained our existence, that we live to please Him by following His laws of existence, and that to Him we shall return. The Muslim develops a persistent feeling that God is present everywhere, with him and within him, seeing, listening, and knowing everything about him. By acknowledging God as the One and Unique Creator, the Muslim acknowledges the fact mentioned in the *Qur'an* that every human belongs to the first family of Adam and Eve, in which family he is enjoined to live harmoniously. Hence, the first principle of the Muslim nation is the unity of all peoples of the world without exception and without discrimination.

However, in view of the fact that every society must have a common ideology, and owing to the different ideologies

prevailing among various groupings of peoples, many distinct societies have been formed. Those who believe in Islam and apply its principles form the Islamic *Ummah* and are united by moral and material bonds peculiar to the Islamic community. This Islamic union does not induce nor encourage Muslims to alienate themselves from other human societies which function by doctrines of belief and ideologies common within those particular communities. On the contrary, Islam exhorts its believers to maintain good relations with all peoples, and to invite them, in civility, to understand Islamic systems and concepts. The relation between the Islamic *Ummah* (or state, when it exists), and other states is based on two principles. The first principle is to approach the non-Islamic society with friendliness and to treat its members as members of one human race. The second principle, dependent on reactions of others to the Muslims' amicable approach, is to apply, what is called in diplomacy, the principle of reciprocity.

The unity of the *Ummah* has two intertwined aspects—spiritual unity and material solidarity.

#### A. SPIRITUAL UNITY

The backbone of the *Ummah* is the common belief of its members which motivates them and brings them into a relationship with each other. Their unity of purpose and objectives derives from their deep monotheism which is built on reason and knowledge. Monotheism teaches them that unity is power, that their mission, which is to serve the cause of God, is the noblest and the most blessed when it is undertaken in accordance with the teaching of their *Shari'a*—serving God by serving humanity in general and their Muslim brothers in particular. It is this spiritual unity that made the Islamic civilization one of the most magnanimous and long-lived civilizations in the past. It is this unity which sustains the Islamic belief in the hearts of Muslims against materialistic and atheistic doctrines which dominate the world at the present time.

<sup>20</sup>Muslim, *al-Jami' al-Sahih*, vol. 4, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup>*Qur'an*, 4: 36.



## 1. Values

Spiritual unity implies a common standard of values. Members of the *Ummah* have an established judgment of what is good and what is bad, just and unjust, commendable and reprehensible. This judgment is not arrived at by means of trial and error. Though it is accepted by the free choice of individuals, it is also a part of their belief and religious convictions. Islam sets the standard of most basic human values and integrates them into its jurisprudence, explaining their *raison d'être* and their logical justification. The underlying premise is that the more united a society is in its standard of values, the closer its individuals are drawn together and the stronger its structure becomes.

## 2. Brotherhood

Any spiritual unity implies a certain degree of spiritual brotherhood among community members. In Islam, the bond that unites Muslims is brotherly love; God describes believers as brethren.<sup>22</sup> Muhammad said "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself."<sup>23</sup> The Prophet also stated that genuine belief is measured by the degree to which a person loves God and His Apostle more than he loves himself and that loving a Muslim brother is purely for God's sake. In other words, the requirement that a Muslim love others is another emphasis on the importance of his accepting the *Shir'a* and its standard of value. Brotherhood and love, when viewed in this perspective, become the cause and effect of each other, while constantly remaining a qualification of genuine faith.

## B. MATERIAL SOLIDARITY

As any other value or universality, spiritual unity continues to be an ideology, a vague idea, and at most a noble feeling in the imagination and the heart of the believer. Unless it is

translated into acts, it can lead to inhibition or disappointment. Therefore, Islamic jurisprudence details numerous rules of behavior which can be summarized as follows:

1. *Al-Wilayah*: This means mutual protection and help. All members of the Muslim *Ummah* are required to help and protect each other whenever the need arises.<sup>24</sup> This is both an individual and a collective obligation, i.e. every individual must extend help to those who need it, while it remains the primary obligation of the community to protect and help its citizens. This principle applies to cases of physical aggression without justification and to cases of poverty. In fact, Muslims are exhorted to quell any oppressive act or wrong doing wherever it takes place and to the best of their ability. *Al-Wilayah* is based on justice. When the Prophet Muhammad said that the Muslim should back his Muslim brother whether the latter is the transgressor or the transgressed, he was asked how one should support the transgressor. His reply was that such support would be to stop him from transgressing.<sup>25</sup>

2. *Security*: The Prophet said: "The whole of a Muslim for another Muslim is inviolable: his blood, his property, and his honor."<sup>26</sup> The collective security of the community is the government's duty. This function of the government is essential both for the protection of human rights and for economic development, while any tumult is a destructive force in a society. God said: "...fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God..."<sup>27</sup>

3. *Sustenance*: Every citizen of an Islamic state, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim, has the right to live decently. The state must provide the indigent and needy citizens with ample food, decent clothes, a suitable dwelling and opportunities for education. The government

<sup>22</sup>*Qur'an*, 3: 103, 49: 10.

<sup>23</sup>*Al-Bukhari, Al-Sahih* (Beirut: Kitab al-Iman, 1974), Vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 72.

<sup>25</sup>*Al-Sahih*, vol. 8, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup>*Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>*Qur'an*, 8: 39.

is also responsible for providing work for those who have no jobs. *Zakat*, as explained before, serves these purposes. If *Zakat* does not suffice to meet the needs of all citizens for sustenance, the state is entitled to impose other taxes on the rich in order to meet the needs of the poor.

## CHAPTER NINE

### GOD, THE UNIVERSE, AND MAN

#### I. THE CREATOR

The Islamic approach to the question of the relationship among mankind, the universe and God is, as we have said, a cogent and logical one. The *Qur'an* abounds with arguments and allegories that illustrate this relationship in a direct and convincing manner. It tells us that every occurrence or phenomenon must have a cause that made it happen or that gave it its being. Accordingly, the whole universe and all beings therein must have been caused to exist by a power other than the universe itself or by what happens in the universe. This *creative* power is called in Islam ALLAH—God. An unbeliever might call such a power "the first cause," or "nature," or "energy," or might refer to it by yet another term. The *Qur'an* argues:

"Who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky? Yea, with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty and delight. It is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them.... Who made the earth firm to live in, made rivers running through it; who set the immovable mountains and separated rivers and seas?"<sup>1</sup>

Muslims believe in Allah as the only creative power to whom all beings belong. Accordingly, God relates to all creation as the Absolute Being, the immortal, the infinite, the omnipotent and the indivisible. He is unique as there is nothing like Him.<sup>2</sup> Man is made of soul (energy) and matter

<sup>1</sup>*Qur'an*, 27: 60-66.

<sup>2</sup>*Qur'an*, 42: 11.



(mass). Both soul and mass are created but cannot create, while God is their Creator. If it is impossible for human minds to imagine whatever is non-material (such as energy, universalities and feelings), how much greater the impossibility of imagining the creative power.

Muslims believe that Jesus was an apostle, born by means of immaculate conception. But because they categorically deny the possibility of there being any "divisibility" of the infinite God, they denounce the Christian principle of the "Trinity" which teaches that Jesus is a part of God. Islam teaches that all apostles, including Muhammad and Jesus, are not divine but mortal creatures who, like all humans, are helpless before their Creator.

In the view of Muslims, Allah has the absolute Will to create whatever He chooses. This Will is expressed by the "Word." If God ordains anything "to be," it becomes.<sup>3</sup> Thus, whatever is in existence is the manifestation and the realization of His "Will" and the response to His command. This Will is the basis of the relationship between Allah, the Creator, and all His creation. Therefore, the Muslim believes that in every being (meaning, in every creation, whether human or non-human, animate or inanimate), there is something basically good because the Will or Word caused the existence of the being and dwells in it or in him as long as God wills it/him to be. The more this Word is manifest in a being, the more good—or even "godly"—the being becomes; but it cannot be said that the individual becomes God or even divine. Muslims believe that Jesus was created as any other being is created, though without a father, because God so willed. "Behold! The angels said: 'O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary....'"<sup>4</sup> The miracle, in the Muslim's view, does not lie in the act of creation, but in God's having created Jesus outside the established law for human procreation. The distinctiveness of his birth was only a sign to help Jesus prove his prophethood and to authenticate his message to the Jewish people who had deviated from the righteous teachings of their original Apostle, Moses.

<sup>3</sup>Qur'an, 36: 82.

<sup>4</sup>Qur'an, 2: 45.

## II. THE UNIVERSE

The Word or the Will of God ordained that the universe exist, and with its creation came divine-specifications and qualifications for every particle in it:

"The universe outside us has made the universe inside us.... In this dizzying cycles and epicycles, protons became neutrons became electrons and then hydrogen and helium, then nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon; finally captured in the cooling mass a nascent life-supporting planet."<sup>5</sup>

It would not be possible for anyone, even a scientist such as Cadmore, to explain the origin of the protons or to explain how these particles could unite together to form the universe or a part of the universe such as a human cell. But it is possible to explain what Muslims accept as a spectacular fact that the Word of God ordained all beings to exist and to follow divine laws of existence. It is this divine law or inherent order in every being that Cadmore's friend calls a "consciousness":

"My best friend says that even back then, at the very start, ...atoms had a consciousness, and that they still have it; complex things like memory are just macro-events that must be made of micro-events like molecules. How else do we explain that, if there were only two hydrogen atoms in all of space, they would 'know' how to find each other? This atomic *consciousness* directs the formation of increasingly complex states, so that atoms not only *remember* what has happened to them but also are directed to form molecules in *certain ways*."<sup>6</sup>

Cadmore, unlike his friend, is not sure that the atom has any consciousness or memory despite the fact that it behaves

<sup>5</sup>L. L. Larison Cadmore, *The Center of Life* (New York Times Book, 1977), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Cadmore, p. 27.

as if it had both. The atoms form molecules through a tightly disciplined process, and the molecules form the living cell which feeds and reproduces other cells. Cells form human organs and we are, in fact, what our cells make us.<sup>7</sup>

Islam teaches that everything, every single electric charge in the atom or every part in the cell, is created according to the certain plans and functions within a pre-ordained system. In other words, when the Word of the Creator wills anything to be, the Word carries with it a law that administers the behavior within the created entity and its behavior in relation to other beings. Science has proven that there is a common factor in all beings which binds them together and makes them behave as if they have a consciousness and/or a memory. This intrinsic element Muslims believe to be the Godly Word which makes all beings good in essence. God says that He "hath created (everything) and further given order and proportion; He hath ordained laws and granted guidance"<sup>8</sup> and "Our Lord is He who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance."<sup>9</sup> In the Muslim's concept, the universe is a highly organized, preplanned existence, totally created by God and absolutely administered by a force inherent in it. This universe is guided by God towards a destiny that man may, or may not, comprehend. The relationship between man and the universe can be expressed only within the limitations of human understanding. The human mind cannot imagine any single created form by itself without having other beings related to it, if only because there must be a mind plus that being. Accordingly, whenever two or more beings exist, there is a predetermined and consistent relationship that exists between them. We shall call this innate relationship "the law of existence" as, in fact, no being can exist without such laws.

### III. INANIMATES, ANIMATES, AND MAN

Whether existence is animate or inanimate, it is always subject to some laws. Inanimates, having no power to deviate from the law, follow the laws that govern them with strict regularity and consistency. For example, when sulphuric acid is added to sodium, sodium sulphate plus water plus oxygen results; when a stone is thrown from a height, gravitational force causes it to fall to the ground and when iron is heated it expands. The automatic relationship between inanimates is the subject of empirical sciences. The act of automatically following the law of existence if called *Tasbeeh*,<sup>10</sup> a word that implies submission in harmonious motion to a dynamic motive. Animates, or living organisms, multiply and increase in number, bearing the traits of their species. All animates, except human beings, react and behave in accordance with certain laws of existence with a minimum of irregularity and exceptions. Non-human living organisms have no meditative power, no free will, and no liberty of choice. Their life is dependent upon the strict order they follow and the circumstances which maintain the integrity of that order and preserve its function. "Life simply has a passion for order. In the only unit of life we know, the cell, everything is ordered; there is carefully controlled direction...Order defines the cell as it defines life."<sup>11</sup>

Human beings constitute a unique category among the different collections of other beings in the universe, as they are made distinctive by their ability to imagine and to choose a course of action. Man alone is endowed with the freedom of choice, and that freedom enables him to act contrary to the laws of existence. When he violates these laws, man imposes disorder upon his own life and upon his environment. Any disorder is a destructive element that threatens life, as humans are made of cells, and order (or the observance of the

<sup>7</sup>Cadmore, pp. 28-36.

<sup>8</sup>*Qur'an*, 87: 2-3.

<sup>9</sup>*Qur'an*, 20: 49-50.

<sup>10</sup>*Qur'an*, 17: 44.

<sup>11</sup>Cadmore, p. 38.



laws of existence) defines life in all cells.

Disorder takes place whenever man either advertently or inadvertently breaks the laws of existence. People sometimes deliberately break these laws when they indulge in pleasure without moderation or without order. For example, sex is a legitimate instinct vital for procreation. All animals mate during particular periods of time which instinct dictates. Only humans are free of any such natural restrictions and can, therefore, undertake sexual activities whenever they like. Islam grants believers this liberty with two provisions—the partner must be a spouse of the opposite sex and moderation must be observed. In fact, the Arabic word (*nikah*) means marriage as well as sexual intercourse, and is used in the *Qur'an* as such. Accordingly, permissiveness, fornication, adultery, homosexuality and spouse-swapping are considered a violation of the laws of existence and are forbidden, even if they are allowed by the laws of a particular land or condoned by a particular society.

Frequently, people break the laws of existence inadvertently because they do not know them, as in the case of contracting cancer or other physical disorders. If a person exposes himself to radiation, or eats contaminated food or even an unbalanced diet, he may be struck by a punishment in the form of disease. If motherhood is denied to a woman, a law of existence is broken and she is bound to suffer the consequences. Any violation of a law inevitably leads to some disorder in the form of a certain suffering or loss or both. Even when individuals unintentionally make a mistake, causing disorder because they are unaware of the law they are violating, they still suffer the consequences of their ignorance. God gave *al-Amanat*, the trust, the freedom of choice consistent with man's gift of awareness. If man betrays the trust, breaks the law, he pays the price—misery and suffering in this world, and the wrath of God and suffering in the hereafter. Islam reveres knowledge and designates knowledgeable men as the heirs of the prophets.

Man is closely related to God both through his subjection to God's irrefutable laws of existence and by the awareness, bestowed on him by virtue of the word, of his creation. This awareness, "will," or free choice of man, is impregnated with a natural desire to acquire all of God's qualifications. Muslims

believe that every human being is born with a yearning to be the most powerful, the most beloved, the most knowledgeable person. This inner force is the echo of the word "Be" uttered by God at the time of a person's creation. Even the cells that constitute a person's body and brain have a natural tendency toward mutation to what is better and finally best. As a consequence, man senses God in his innermost feeling, and indeed, "He (God) is nearer to him (man) than (his) jugular vein."<sup>12</sup>

Awareness and heeding God's laws are a basic human function called *khilafa* which means vicegerency of God on earth. Man has been created on earth since the beginning and was ordained to develop its resources.<sup>13</sup> Having been given *al-Amanat*, people are required to seek out the laws of existence and apply them in their everyday life. Since humans cannot live by themselves without animals and plants and the elements of the earth, and as man is the only creature who has the awareness and power of judgment, he was made an agent of God on earth to practice His teachings and execute His laws.<sup>14</sup> This doctrine of vicegerency plays an extremely important part in Islamic ideology as well as in the Islamic concept of mundane life. We are here concerned with the relationship between man and God—a relationship which becomes more evident and more defined when the concept of vicegerency is admitted and practiced.

Any person, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, who believes in God as an absolute power and in his own vicegerency to God, has an attitude toward God and all of His creation that reflects:

1. Gratitude to God for His trust;
2. Earnestness in carrying out the responsibilities of this agency;
3. Fairness and justice that must be observed in interacting with others;

<sup>12</sup>*Qur'an*, 50: 16.

<sup>13</sup>*Qur'an*, 11: 61.

<sup>14</sup>*Qur'an*, 2: 30, 6: 165.

4. Acceptance of the fact that whatever is on the earth belongs to Allah, and that Allah gave us the awareness to rejoice in His bounties in accordance with the terms of our agency, i.e. the laws of existence.

#### IV. 'IBADAT (WORSHIP)

The considerations discussed above constitute the core of worship in Islam. The original meaning of the word 'ibadat is to obey and submit to the master. In Islamic terminology, it means to obey Allah by following His laws of existence and to respond to His call as inscribed in His *Qur'an*.

There are two categories of activities that a Muslim is required to perform—ritual worship and transactional worship. Ritual worship is the performance of the five pillars of Islam discussed in chapter seven. Transactional worship is compliance with the Islamic laws concerning a person's interaction with his fellow men and his attitude towards his environment.

The five pillars of Islam are prescribed in order to help the Muslim develop his spiritual experience through physical practice. The final goal of such rituals is to bring man nearer to God so as to secure His guidance in finding His laws and complying with them. Rituals, then, are mostly aimed at perfecting a person's societal behavior. Transactional worship is a confirmation of faith, defined by Muhammad as that belief which is instilled in the heart and confirmed by and reflected in the individual's actions. Any person who tries to observe the established laws of behavioral transactions, heeding God in whatever he says or does, would be contributing to his own faith and supplementing his belief. Thence, spiritual rituals contribute to more meaningful and righteous transactional worship, while transactional worship contributes to more meaningful and righteous transactional worship. This is the optimum relationship between man, his universe, and God.

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***Concept of Islam*** is a straight-forward presentation of the fundamental beliefs of Islam, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the events leading to his establishment of an Islamic state governed according to the divine principles of the *Qur'an*. In the West, this religion has been so associated with propagation by the sword, oppression of women, and social backwardness in the minds of misinformed individuals that it has been nearly impossible to find non-prejudiced and accurate material about Islam. As more and more Americans are coming into ever-increasing contact with immigrant, foreign-born student and American Muslims, many of these earlier misconceptions and half-truths are being dispelled. This book seeks to inform Americans, who are being thrown into contact with Muslims trying to order their lives according to the *Qur'an* and the example left to them by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, about Islam.

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